FROM THE CREATOR OF *GUNSMITH CATS*

HENICHI SONODA

CANNON GOD EXAXXION

STAGE 2

CANNON GOD EXAXXION

STORY AND ART BY
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LETTERING AND TOUCH-UP
SUSIE LEE with TOM 2K

2

STAGE 2

DARK HORSE MANGA™

1-A
2.1
STAGE 2.1

WHAT'S YOUR BEEF, HOICHI? AND DON'T GIVE ME SOME PEACENIK BULL ABOUT WANTING TO SURRENDER TO SAVE LIVES...!
I'M NOT SAYING THAT! BUT--
WE'VE GOT TO REASSURE THE JAPANESE PEOPLE...HELL, EVERYONE ON EARTH, REALLY! WE HAVE TO SHOW THEM EXAXXION'S TRUE POWER!

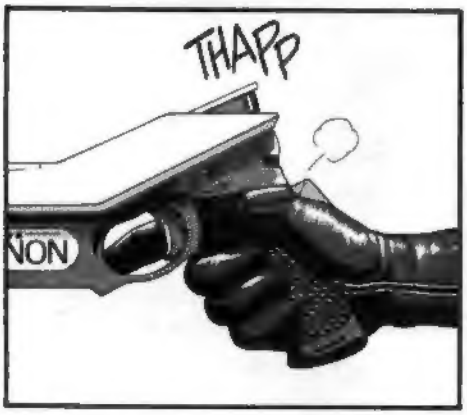
NO ONE SIDES WITH A WEAKLING, MY BOY! AND BESIDES...THOSE CHOPPERS BUZZING AROUND YOU, THE ONES YOU'RE SO CONCERNED ABOUT...
THEY'RE DOOMED, ANY-WAY!
D... DOOMED?!

WH-WHAT ?!
BWEEE
WHETHER THEY'RE DESTROYED BY THE EXA-CANNON'S MUZZLE BLAST, OR A THIRD RIOFALDIAN CANNON STRIKE... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

NOW, WE'RE A PROUD FOLK, WE EARTH-LINGS...
MM... LOVE THIS SMELL
EEK!
...SO, BEFORE TOO LONG, THERE'LL BE GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS, EVEN WHOLE NATIONS REBELLING, ALL OVER THE PLANET.
AHH! I'LL HAVE TO SWITCH TO THE SAME RINSE!

AND THEY'LL ALL BE SLAUGHTERED! TOGETHER WITH THE ILL AND THE WEAK OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, NO DOUBT...
REMEMBER, THE RIOFALDIANS ARE STRICT EUGENICISTS.
...ALL IN THE NAME OF PEACE AND STABILITY, OF COURSE.
IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN, HOICH!! THE RIOFALDIANS ARE AN EXPANSIONIST RACE, JUST AS WE ARE!

OKAY! GOT IT, GRAND-PA...!
BUT...THIS EXA-CANNON... CAN IT REALLY PUNCH RIGHT THROUGH THE ARMOR OF THAT ROBOT BACK AT THE SPACE ELEVATOR TERMINAL...?
OF COURSE, LADDIE!

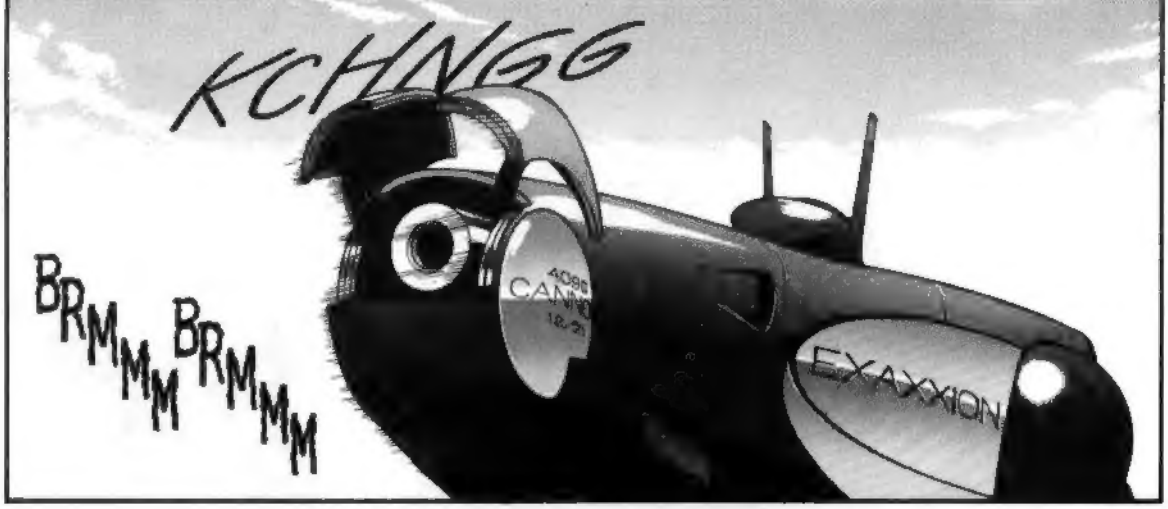

THAPP
NON

ISAKA!
YES, MASTER HOICHI...?
BWEEE
TARGET THAT ROBOT AT THE ELEVATOR BASE, OKAY?
YES, SIR!

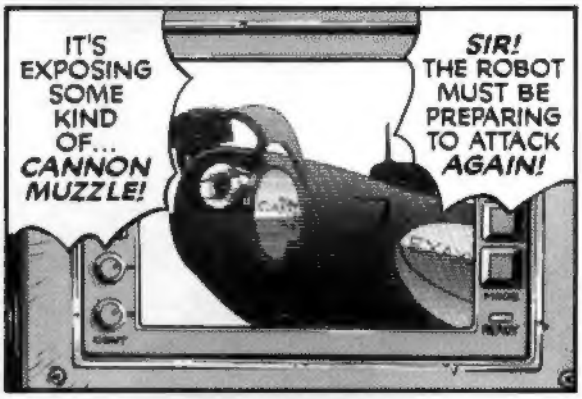
NOW, KEEP IN MIND THAT RAIL GUNS AREN'T RIFLED... INSTEAD OF SPIN STABILIZATION, WE USE MORPHING ROUNDS.
HUH? WHAT'RE THOSE?
THINK--OUR ROUND'S TRAJECTORY HAS TO FOLLOW THE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH, RIGHT? SO WE FEED THE PROJECTILE A STREAM OF COMMANDS-- USING HACKED COMSATS-- TO CONTINUOUSLY RESHAPE ITS AERODYNAMIC PROFILE IN FLIGHT...!
EARTH

NOW LOADING ONE 4096SR ARMOR-PIERCING ROUND!
MASTER HOICHI, ORIENT EXAXXION EAST-SOUTHEAST, PLEASE. I'LL HANDLE THE FINE ADJUSTMENTS FOR TARGETING.

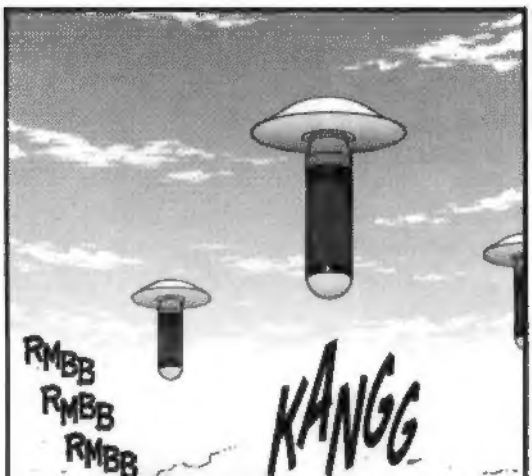
YOU GOT IT!
SHNKK


KCHNGG
BRMMMM BRMMMM
EXAXXION

SIR... THE ROBOT'S TURNING!
AND IT'S OPENING A HATCH...

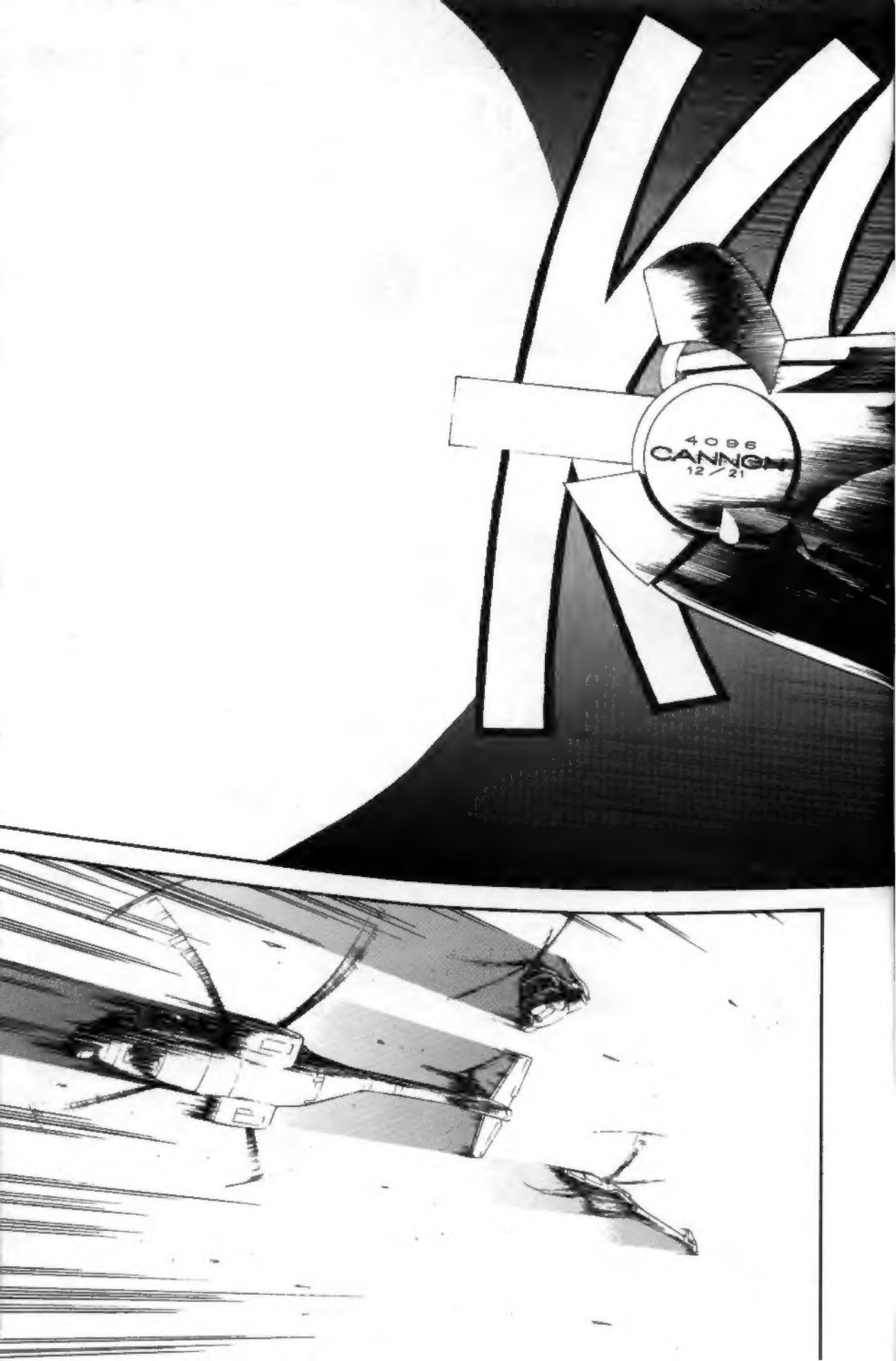

IT'S EXPOSING SOME KIND OF... CANNON MUZZLE!
SIR! THE ROBOT MUST BE PREPARING TO ATTACK AGAIN!

KOOM
KSHANGG


RMBB RMBB RMBB
KANGG

IS IT TARGETING THIS BASE...?
THAT ROBOT'S CANNON IS DEFINITELY ORIENTED IN OUR DIRECTION, SIR...!

CALI-BER ...?
AH...AT LEAST FOUR TIMES LARGER THAN SOROSARM'S MAIN CANNON, SIR... AND ITS ARMOR R-REGISTERED ZERO DEFORMATION AFTER OUR LAST STRIKE!
IT MUST MOUNT AT LEAST GRADE FOUR GRAVITY AND INERTIA CONTROL!
EASILY THE POWER OF A HEAVY CRUISER, IN SUCH A TINY FRAME...!
EXAXXION
THIS CAN'T POSSIBLY BE NATIVE TECHNOL-OGY!
NOTIFY GENERAL SHES'KA AT ONCE!
I ALREADY HAVE, SIR...
...WE'RE STILL AWAITING ORDERS...
ROUND IS NOW LOADED...
TARGET IS LOCKED...
...AND I'VE "ACQUIRED" SUFFICIENT SATELLITE RESOURCES FOR COMMAND RELAY.
BRMMM
PSHTT
KCHNG
KCHAK
ALL SYSTEMS GREEN, MASTER HOICHI.
ON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SHOOM
EXAXXION

KSHANGG
FWOOSH
WHAM!

SIR... ITS CANNON HAS FIRED!
THE ROUND'S BEARING TARGETS US...BUT IT'S ON AN ORBITAL TRAJECTORY, SO WE'RE NOT--
WAIT! THE PROJECTILE'S ALTITUDE IS LEVELING OFF!
SIR! IT'S DEFINITELY CHANGING TRAJECTORY! IT MUST BE A MORPHING ROUND!
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! EARTH CAN'T DO THAT!
THEY'D NEED DEDICATED SATELLITE LINKS TO--
THEY HAVE THEM, SIR! SOMEONE'S HACKING INTO OUR COMSAT NETWORK!
FOUR SATELLITES ARE BEING OVERRIDDEN... UNITS FE09 THROUGH FE12!
HAVE YOU REACHED THE GENERAL YET?
STILL NO RESPONSE, SIR!
KEEP TRYING, DAMN IT!
I'LL GO GET HIM MYSELF, SIR!
BWEEE
VREEP
CLOSE PROGRAM.
ZZZP
CONTACT ORBITAL BASE ONE.
GET ME COLONEL PURU'UB, NOW!
PINGG
S-SIR! PATEEZ PURU'UB HERE...! WE'RE RUSHING TO MAKE UP FOR THE CONSTRUCTION DELAYS THAT YOU--
WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER!
RIGHT NOW, I NEED YOU TO BREAK THE SEALS ON CONTAINER EIGHT, AND LOAD IT ONTO GASTA'AF!

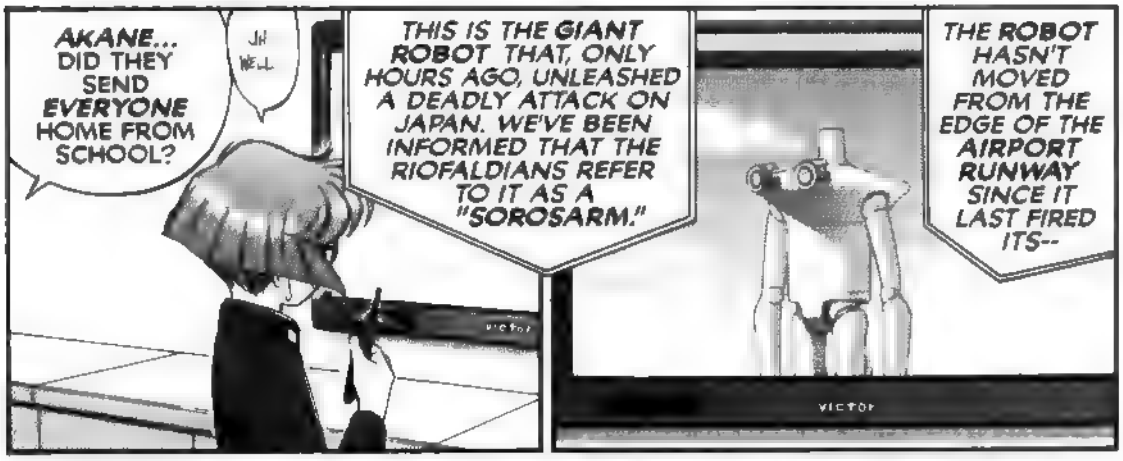
BUT, SIR... GASTA'AF HAS BEEN TASKED TO TRANSPORT A SHIPMENT OF IMPOUNDED WEAPONS FROM NORTH AMERICA...
THEN SEND THEM ANOTHER FREIGHTER.
AND, AH, CONTAINER EIGHT, SIR...IT'S STILL PACKED IN A CARGO SHELL, FOR TRANSIT FROM THE HOMEWORLD... WE'LL NEED TIME TO--
PUT ALL YOUR CREWS ON IT!
INFORM ME THE INSTANT THAT THE UNIT'S EQUIPPED AND OPERATIONAL!
UNDER-STOOD, SIR. I'LL GIVE IT TOP PRIORITY.
BINGO BONGO
GENERAL SHES'KA! PLEASE!
YOU'RE NEEDED IN THE OP-CENTER, SIR...!
SHSSK
EEK!
UM... AH, SIR ...?
I'M AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENED. LET'S GO.
I'LL GIVE ORDERS WHILE WE WALK...RELAY THEM TO THE OP-CENTER.

START WITH *THIS* COMMAND--
--IMMEDIATELY MOVE *ONE HUNDRED HUMANS* TO EXPOSED AREAS AT THE ELEVATOR-BASE AIRPORT. SELECT MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN.
Y-YES, SIR...
HEY! HAS ANYONE SEEN *AKANE?*
YEAH-- SHE TOOK OFF.
WHAT?! AT A TIME LIKE *THIS?!*
WHSHH
AUNTIE!
"AUNTIE" *REIKO!*
SNNSSH

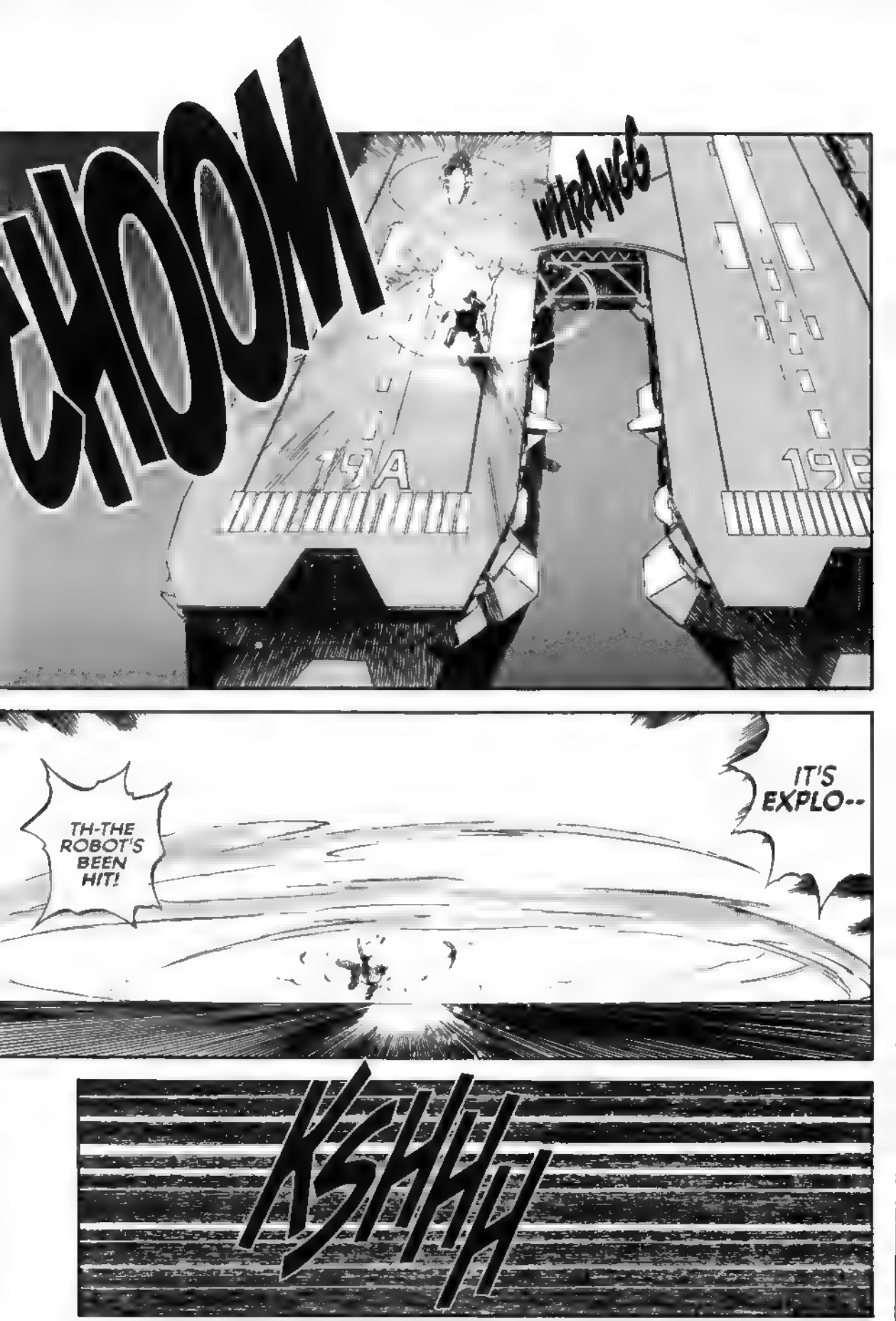
IS... IS HE BACK YET ...?
THIS... THIS IS GUN'S JACKET, AUNTIE REIKO...
WHY, AKANE, DEAR... WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU WEARING ...?
WASN'T MY SON WITH YOU...?
HOICHI? NO, NOT YET, DEAR.
AUNTIE! I'VE GOT TO CHECK THE NEWS...!
DON'T TELL ME... HAWAII ?!
THEN... WHERE'D HE GO ON THAT FLYING BIKE THING...?

KLIK KLIK KLIK KLIK
BREEP
BEEP BEEP BEEP
BRRT
WHO ARE YOU CALLING, HONEY? YOU CAN ALWAYS USE OUR PHONE, YOU KNOW...
I'M CALLING MY SISTER IN HAWAII, AUNTIE... AT THE SPACE ELEVATOR BASE...

--YOUR CALL CANNOT BE COMPLETED AT THIS TIME. PLEASE TRY--
THEY'VE CUT ACCESS AGAIN ...?
BREEP
--FINALLY RECEIVED PERMIS-SION TO RESUME BROAD-CASTING.
NEWS


AKANE... DID THEY SEND EVERYONE HOME FROM SCHOOL?
UH WELL
THIS IS THE GIANT ROBOT THAT, ONLY HOURS AGO, UNLEASHED A DEADLY ATTACK ON JAPAN. WE'VE BEEN INFORMED THAT THE RIOFALDIANS REFER TO IT AS A "SOROSARM."
THE ROBOT HASN'T MOVED FROM THE EDGE OF THE AIRPORT RUNWAY SINCE IT LAST FIRED ITS--
victor

WHOOSH
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME-THING TO DRINK, DEAR...?


-KOOM
WHRAHGG
19A
19B
TH-THE ROBOT'S BEEN HIT!
IT'S EXPLO--
KSHHH

OH, MY... HOW AWFUL!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

ORDERS FROM OUR EMBASSY... DEPLOY THE AUDITORIUM'S DISPLAY SCREEN. EVERYONE MUST WATCH.

tasco

VMMMM

MISTER KOBA! MISTER KOBA! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

IS THE CAMERA-MAN OKAY?

PLIK

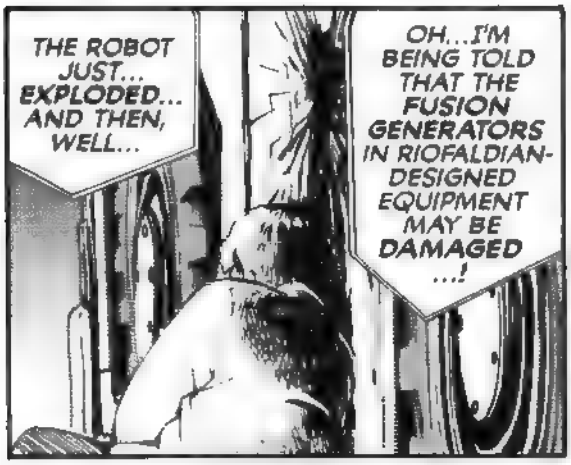
OH... OH, GOD...

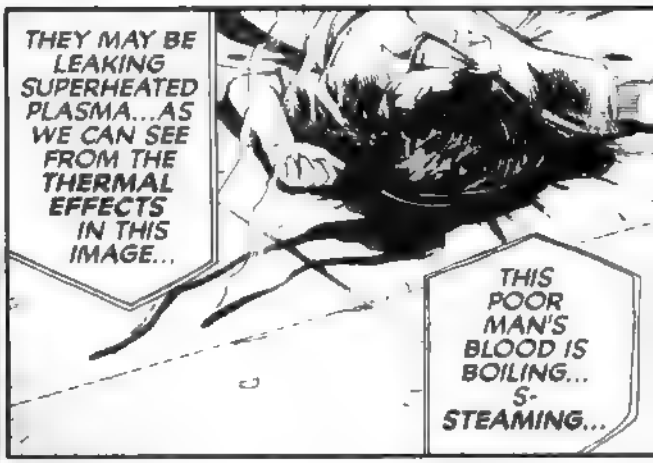
H-HELP ME ...!

JESUS CHRIST ...!
KEEP ROLLING, DAMN IT!
I'LL HELP HIM!
D-DON'T MOVE!
FWAPP

HUH ...?

IS THIS ALL FROM THE BLAST WAVE? WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED ...?


THE ROBOT JUST... EXPLODED... AND THEN, WELL...
OH...I'M BEING TOLD THAT THE FUSION GENERATORS IN RIOFALDIAN-DESIGNED EQUIPMENT MAY BE DAMAGED ...!


THEY MAY BE LEAKING SUPERHEATED PLASMA...AS WE CAN SEE FROM THE THERMAL EFFECTS IN THIS IMAGE...
THIS POOR MAN'S BLOOD IS BOILING... S-STEAMING...

TV HOLE
037cm
SIZE N

THAT'S... THAT'S FROM THE SHELL I FIRED ...?
RELAX, MY BOY. THESE CASUALTIES ARE WELL WITHIN ACCEPTABLE PARAM-ETERS.
WE'LL MAKE UP FOR THIS LATER
I JUST KILLED CIVILIANS, GRANDPA! HEROES DON'T DO THAT!
THE HERO IS THE GUY WHO WINS, HOICHI.
DON'T WORRY, ALL RIGHT? JUSTICE BELONGS TO THE VICTOR.
ISAKA! GET ME OUTTA HERE!
AH... PARDON?
I'M OUT OF THIS MURDER MACHINE! TAKE ME DOWN. RIGHT NOW!
PSHHT
FWHOOSH
VREEE
GUNNE ROOM

TO BE CONTINUED...!

CANNON GOD EXAXXION XXX-TRA SPICY PINUP

KRKK
DAMN IT--!
USING THIS ROBOT...
...I'M JUST A FRIGGIN' MURDER-ER!
WHOOSH
I'M NO BETTER THAN THE DAMN ALIENS!
HEY, GRAND-PA...
...WHAT THE HELL'S "HEROIC" ABOUT THAT, HUH?
FSHOOM

SHOOOOM

THE *PILOT* APPEARS TO HAVE *ABANDONED* THE ROBOT'S COCKPIT, SIR.
AND LEFT THE ROBOT *BEHIND...?* WHAT IS HE *DOING?*

BEARING EAST NORTHEAST, SPEED AT *MACH 1.2* AND STILL ACCELERATING...WE'RE GETTING NO *RADAR RETURN* OFF HIM, SO WE'RE RELYING ON *VISUAL TRACKING* ONLY...!
*AH...*HE'S GONE INTO THE *CLOUDS,* SIR... WE'VE *LOST* HIM.

ALL JAPANESE AND AMERICAN *MILITARY ELECTRONICS* WITHIN A FIFTY-KILOMETER RADIUS HAVE BEEN *KNOCKED OUT,* SIR...AND THE SAME APPLIES TO *OUR* UNITS, AS WELL...
HUH... *E.M.P.* EFFECTS FROM THAT MONSTER'S *MASS DRIVER* CANNON...?

WE NEED MORE THAN JUST *SATELLITE RECON,* HERE...GET *EVERY* AVAILABLE AIR ASSET OUT THERE, *NOW!*
COMB THE *ENTIRE AREA* AROUND THAT ELEVATOR! MOBILIZE *ALL FORCES* IN THE KANTO REGION! I WANT THE LAUNCH SITE *SECURED* AND THAT ROBOT *CAPTURED!*
OEBI

UM, *MASTER KANO,* SIR... IS THIS, WELL... *SAFE?*
I MEAN, JUST LEAVING EXAXXION *OUT THERE,* LIKE THIS...?

HAH! FOR-GET IT!
RIGHT NOW, WE GOTTA CELEBRATE HOICHI'S FIRST SORTIE!
OOH! ♥ SHALL I CHILL SOME CHAM-PAGNE, SIR?
YOU BETCHA! STRIP DOWN AND HEAD FOR THE HOT TUB, LADIES...IT'S ABOUT TIME WE HAD SOME FUN!
OH, MASTER KANO, YOU'RE SO NAUGHTY ...! ♥
TEE HEE
WE'VE GOT SOME TIME TO KILL BEFORE HOICHI GETS BACK IN THE GAME, SO...
MISS TANEGASHIMA, BRING THE VIAGRA AND THE MASSAGE OIL, ALL RIGHT?
AND THE VIBRATING TOYS
YES, SIR!
SCREW HIS DAMN GLOVE! AND SCREW HIM!

FWAPP
JUST GIVE IT BACK TO HIM, HUH? I'M OUTTA THE HERO BUSINESS!
I'LL NEVER TRUST THAT OLD FART AGAIN!
KREEEK
SNNMM
WHAT SHOULD I DO, MASTER KANO ...?
LET HIM GET A TASTE OF THE OCCUPATION FOR HIMSELF, ISAKA. HE'LL COME AROUND, BELIEVE ME.
SHAKK
WHOA! HOICHI--?! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN, MAN?!
JUST, UH, HANGING OUT.
HIDING OUT IN THE EMERGENCY SHELTER LIKE A BABY AIN'T MY STYLE...
THEN, YOU DON'T KNOW ...?

KNOW ABOUT *WHAT* ...?

THE *RIOFALD-IAN COPS* ARE HERE!

CHECK OUT THAT MONSTER IN THE *COAT*-- OVER THERE SEE? IT CAME TO COLLECT THAT *TERMINAL DRONE'S* PIECES...

MONSTER... IN A *COAT* ...?

HE ONLY NEEDED *TWO ROUNDS* TO DESTROY A *DRONE* ...?

SEEMS THAT WAY, SIR... THIS AGREES WITH THE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM THE *STUDENTS*, ANYWAY.

LOOK AT THIS! IT'S *.50 CALIBER*, ALL RIGHT, BUT WITH SO *SHORT* A CARTRIDGE--

--THIS COULDN'T *POSSIBLY* HOLD ENOUGH CHEMICAL PROPELLANT TO PENETRATE A TERMINAL DRONE'S ARMOR.

HEY, *BARU-CHAD'D*... TAKE A LOOK.

MATCHES BULLET RECOVERED FROM DRONE ONE-ZERO-FIVE.
RESIDUE ANALYSIS CONFIRMS PROPELLANT OF NON-TERRESTRIAL ORIGIN.
EJECTOR COMPRESSION MARKS SUGGEST A HUMAN COULD NOT FIRE THIS WEAPON.
VREEE
ESTIMATED RECOIL--OVER TEN TIMES GREATER THAN TERRESTRIAL .50 CALIBER ACTION EXPRESS PISTOL ROUND.
YEAH... EVEN THE EJECTED CASINGS WERE DRIVEN INTO CONCRETE...
SO OUR MAN IN BLACK MUST BE A CYBORG OR AN ANDROID, THEN...OR IS HE WEARING A POWER-SUIT...?
THAT'S ONE BIG MOTHER ...!
YEAH...A RIOFALDIAN DRONE TROOPER, THEY SAID. AND THE PRINCIPAL SAYS, "OBEY HIM, OR ELSE"...!
AND CHECK OUT THAT BAG... HE'S CARRYING THE "BLACK EIGHTBALL" PART OF THE DRONE IN IT...!
SAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO MISS KIN'BA ...?
BEATS ME... I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE WE WERE SENT DOWN TO THE SHELTER.

HEY! YOU *STUDENTS!* GET BACK TO CLASS!

WHTT

OUR TOP PRIORITY IS THE *UNIDENTIFIED COMBATANT.*

WE'LL RUN CHECKS ON EVERYONE... *TEACHERS,* TOO.

I WILL ASSIST.

THERE ARE RIOFALDIAN TEACHERS.

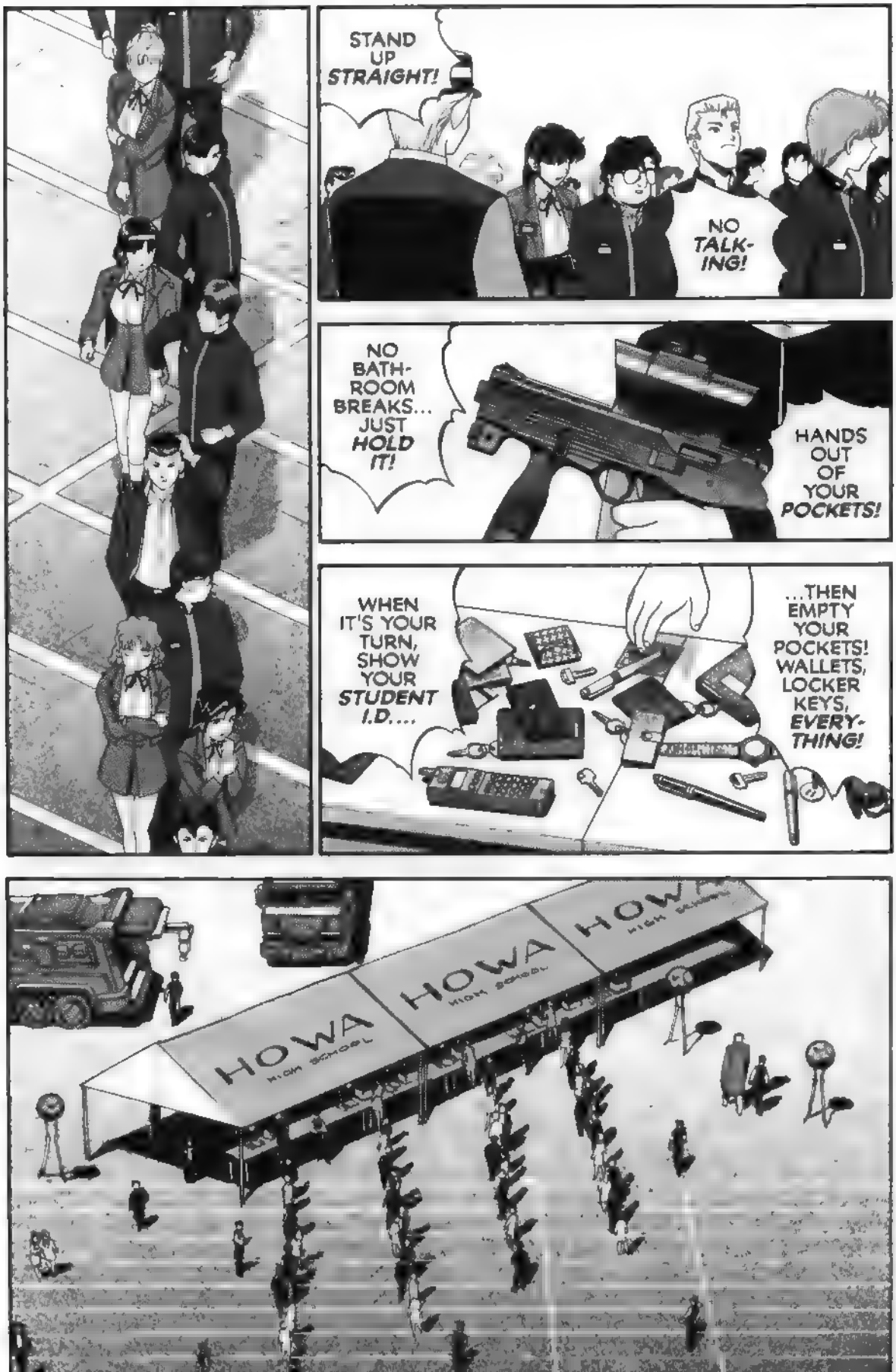
FWHPD

KRAK

SCAN *EVERYONE.* IN FACT, DO THAT *KIN'BA* FIRST-- SHE'S A *WITNESS.*

HELLO, CHILDREN.

LET'S MAKE NICE, NEAT LINES!


STAND UP STRAIGHT!
NO TALK-ING!
NO BATH-ROOM BREAKS... JUST HOLD IT!
HANDS OUT OF YOUR POCKETS!
WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN, SHOW YOUR STUDENT I.D....
...THEN EMPTY YOUR POCKETS! WALLETS, LOCKER KEYS, EVERY-THING!
HOWA HIGH SCHOOL
HOWA HIGH SCHOOL
HOWA HIGH SCHOOL

PLACE YOUR HANDS ON THE BLACK SENSOR PLATE AND LOOK INTO THE SCANNER.
WH... WHA--
WE'RE TAKING RETINAL MEMBRANE SCANS, PALM PRINTS AND DNA SAMPLES...
...AND CHECKING ANTHROPO-METRICS. NOW-- STAND ON THE FOOT MARKS.
N-NO WAY! I'M NOT SOME CRIMINAL!
WHOO
DO IT NOW!
OWW!! S-STOP! I'VE GOT RIGHTS!
HEY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING--?
GUYS! GUYS!
Y'KNOW THAT TENT SET-UP IN THE SCHOOL-YARD? WELL, THEY'RE LOOKING FOR THE GUY IN THE BLACK SUIT!
YEAH, I FIGURED THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE UP TO...
HEY! THE SOPHO-MORES ARE LINING UP OUT THERE...!

SEE? THOSE ORANGE JER-SEYS?
YOU'RE RIGHT...WHICH MEANS THEY'LL SEND US FRESHMAN OUT NEXT...
THIS IS BAD...

...BUT I DITCHED THE GLOVE, SO EVERY-THING SHOULD BE COOL...

YO, HOICHI, MY MAN... DIDJA GET IT ON WITH THE STACKED CHICK?
GLKK

WHOA-- SHE CAN'T TAKE HER EYES OFFA YA...!

TEE HEE

LUCKY BASTARD... SHE SAID SHE TRANS-FERRED HERE JUST FOR YOU...!
SO SHE PUTS OUT, HUH?
OH, MAN... ISAKA! WHAT IF THEY FIGURE OUT SHE'S AN ANDROID?

SHE MUST BE PROGRAMMED NOT TO BLAB ABOUT ME...BUT WHAT IF THEY SCAN HER MEMORY OR SOMETHING...?
OH, SHIT...WAIT! I AM SCREWED! SHE'S GOT THE GLOVE WITH HER!

BRAKKA BRAKKA

OH MY G-GOD!!
Y-YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SHOOT HIM!
SHUT UP!
HOLY SHIT...HIS BRAINS ARE SPILLIN' OUT!
WHERE ARE THE JAPANESE COPS, DAMN IT?
THEY'RE RIGHT OUTSIDE THE GATE!
HEY! OVER HERE! THE ALIENS JUST KILLED A KID!
....
....
SILENCE, MONKEYS!
STEP OUT OF LINE AND YOU'LL BE SHOT, TOO!

AND DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO APPEAL TO THE TOKYO METROPOLITAN POLICE...THEY'RE ***UNDER OUR COMMAND...*** AS ARE ***ALL OF YOU.***

UNDER-STAND THIS-- ***YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS!***

WE'RE ***ALLOWING*** YOU TO LIVE! DO NOT ***FORGET*** IT!

I'M AUTHORIZED TO ***TERMINATE*** ANY HUMAN WHO OBSTRUCTS THE PEACEFUL EXECUTION OF OUR PUBLIC DUTIES!

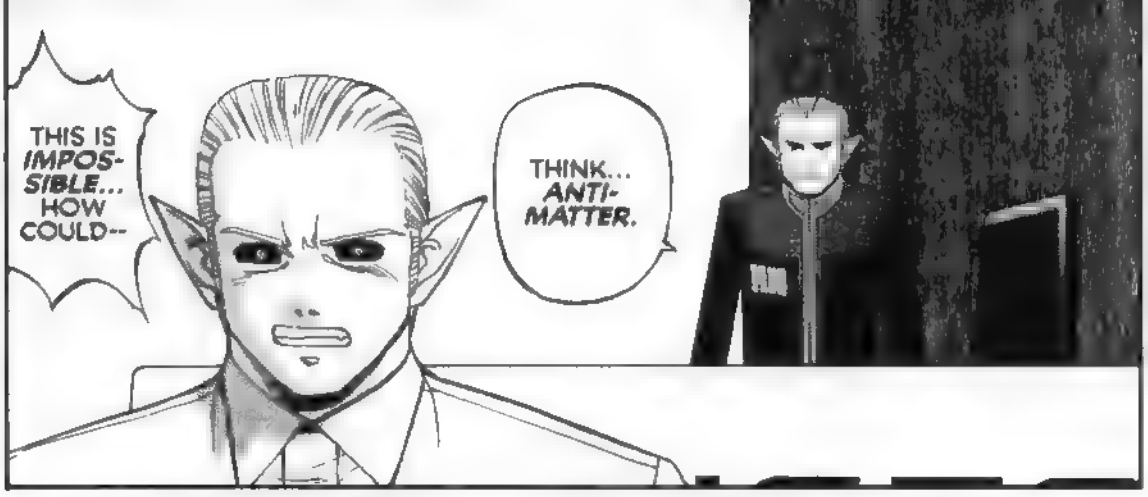
OBEY OUR ***COMMANDS,*** AND YOU WON'T GET ***HURT!***

STOP ACTING LIKE ***ANIMALS!*** ACT LIKE ***RIOFALDIANS...*** AND ***FOLLOW ORDERS!***

KRKK

OH MAN LOOK AT HIS BRAINS!
NO WAY!
THEY SHOT SOME BODY
OH WOW
WHKOOM WHKOOM WHKOOM

NO GOOD, SIR!
WE'VE DETONATED SHAPED CHARGES AT ALL JOINTS AND WELDS...
...WITH NO EFFECT AT ALL, SIR!
IT MAY BE IMMOBILE, BUT ITS DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS APPEAR TO BE FULLY OPERATIONAL... WE'RE DETECTING THE SIGNATURES OF VERY INTENSE ELECTROMAGNETIC AND GRAVITATIONAL FLUXES UNDER ITS ARMOR...!
WE THINK IT'S USING INERTIA CONTROL SYSTEMS TO DIFFUSE THE BLASTS, SIR.
THOSE ARE HEAVY CRUISER... NO, BATTLE-SHIP-LEVEL DEFENSES!
BUT A GENERATOR POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DO THIS COULDN'T POSSIBLY FIT IN SUCH A SMALL FRAME...!
EVEN OUR HIGHEST-LEVEL FUSION SYSTEMS ARE TOO LOW-YIELD TO EXPLAIN THIS...AND WE NEVER EVEN SOLD THOSE SYSTEMS ON THIS PLANET!
AN EXTERNAL POWER SOURCE, THEN ...?
WE'RE NOT DETECTING ANY TRANSMISSIONS TO THE ROBOT, SIR... ITS POWER SOURCE HAS TO BE SELF-CONTAINED.



PRECISELY. I'VE RECEIVED SPECIAL ORDERS FROM THE HOME-WORLD...
...CAPTURING THAT ROBOT, AND ITS ANTIMATTER GENERATOR, ARE NOW ARE OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY!

BUT, SIR...WE'VE TRIED LASERS, EXPLOSIVES... EVEN SOROSARM'S HYPER-PENETRATOR ROUNDS! IF THOSE CAN'T BREACH ITS ARMOR...
REGARDLESS, KEEP TRYING! WITH THE PILOT GONE, NOW IS OUR BEST OPPORTUNITY!
THEY MIGHT TRY TO REMOTELY ACTIVATE THIS ROBOT...SO COAT ITS ANTENNAS WITH RADIO-ABSORBENT COMPOUNDS AND LAUNCH AN ECM* BLITZ.

*: ELECTRONIC COUNTERMEASURES

OF COURSE, SIR... WE'LL TRY EVERY-THING, BUT...
I KNOW.
IN THE MEAN-TIME, I'LL WORK A DIFFERENT ANGLE...
...IF THIS ROBOT IS PROTECTED BY HIGH-OUTPUT GRAVITY AND INERTIA CONTROL SYSTEMS, THE ONLY ANSWER IS OVERWHELMING KINETIC ENERGY!
I'VE DEPLOYED THE PERFECT HEAVY-MASS WEAPON TO ORBITAL BASE ONE.
IT SHIPS FOR JAPAN THE MOMENT IT'S READY...
THINK OF IT... ANTIMATTER! RIOFALD EXPENDED ITS OWN STOCKS CENTURIES AGO... AND NOW, WE'VE FOUND A NEW SUPPLY!
HOWEVER THESE MONKEYS MANAGED TO DEVELOP A POWER SOURCE ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE BEYOND FUSION...IT'S OURS NOW!

KCHINGG
KLINGG
TINGG
TO MASTER HOICHI'S TRIAL BY FIRE!
TO PEACE ON EARTH!
TO EXAXXION'S SUCCESS!
MAY MASTER KANO BE A LITTLE... KINDER!
TO MASTER KANO'S VICTORY!
GLP

NOTHING LIKE *ICE COLD* CHAMPAGNE AFTER A HARD DAY'S WORK!
AAAH! TERRIFIC! *THAT'S* MORE LIKE IT!
HOW ABOUT SOME THAT'S NOT *QUITE* AS COLD...?
OH, MASTER KANO!
UM... MASTER KANO ...? *SIR?*
JUST LET IT GO AND GIVE ME A *COOL SHOWER,* BABE!
EEK!
FMPD
WITH MASTER HOICHI NOT WEARING THE *GUNNER GLOVE...*
...ARE YOU *SURE* HE'S SAFE, SIR?
OF *COURSE!* I TOLD *ISAKA* TO COVER HIS SORRY ASS!

DON'T CAUSE A COMMO-TION, NOW...!
SHMP
HUH?
SHEESH, MAN! NOW AIN'T THE TIME FOR THAT!
EEK ...!
OOH, IT'S HIM AND HE'S WEARING HIS GLOVE, DADDY...
FEEL LIKE WEARING THE GLOVE AGAIN, YET...?
I DON'T WANNA OWE GRANDPA ANY-THING!
BUT IF YOU DUMP THE OLD FART AND WORK FOR ME, THEN MAYBE--
I CAN'T DO THAT, HOICHI. I'M AN ANDROID, AND MASTER KANO'S SLAVE, YOU SEE...!
ALL RIGHT, THEN... FORGET IT.
IN THAT CASE, TIME FOR A NEW TOPIC, MASTER HOICHI--
--YOUR FRIEND AKANE IS ON THEIR WANTED LIST.
WHAT ...?!
SHH! I'VE BEEN MONITORING THEIR COMLINK TRANSMISSIONS. APPARENTLY, SHE LEFT SCHOOL EARLY, BUT DIDN'T GO HOME...

UH... THANKS, ISAKA.
NOT A PROBLEM... BUT DO TRY TO PROTECT HER, WON'T YOU?
HEY, ISAKA, WAIT ...!
AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF BEING, YOU KNOW, SCREENED ...?
I'M FINE, HOICHI.
ELECTRONICS ARE A SPECIALTY OF MINE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...!
OH, YEAH... RIGHT.
WE COLLECT RETINAL AND PALM SCANS NOW.
SHOW YOUR I.D. STAND ON THE FLOOR MARKS.
HUH? MY I.D.'S .. GONE ?!

TO BE CONTINUED...!

THE FUTURE OF

PLANET EARTH IS IN

THE HANDS OF A

TROUBLED TEEN...

WITH A MAMMOTH MACHINE!

DIRECT SALES

00911

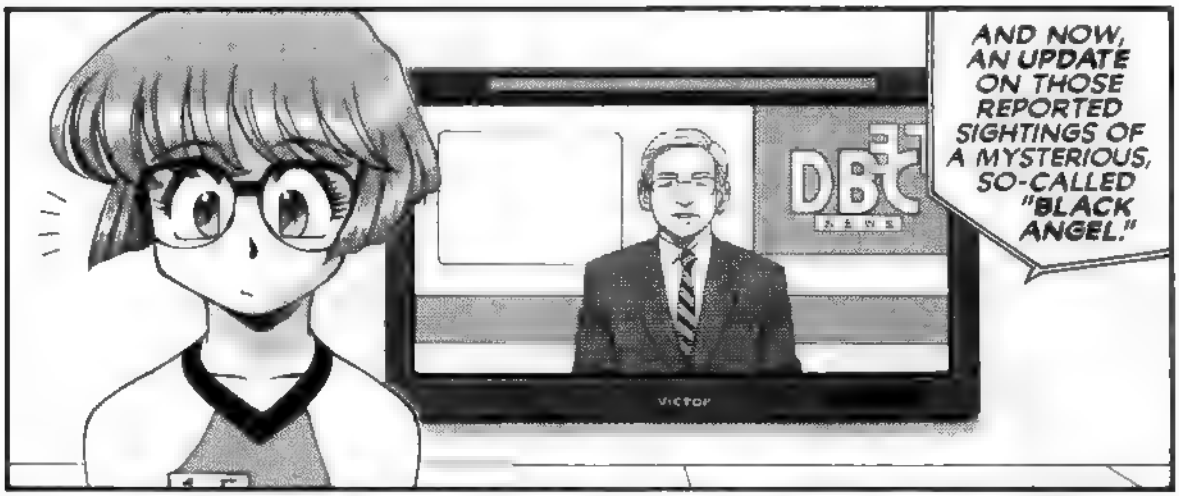
61568 11165 1

2.2

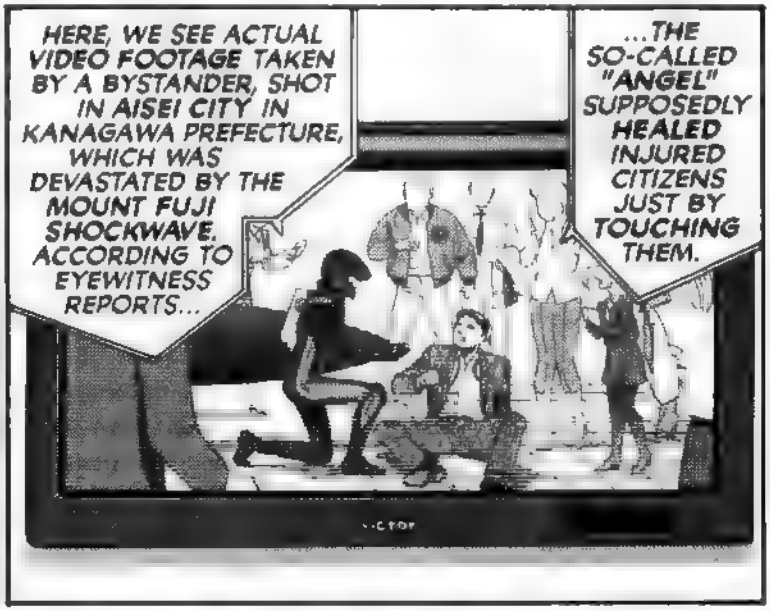
YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR STUDENT I.D.?
LATER! PUT YOUR HANDS ON THE PAD, NOW!
BEEEP
THUD
VRRT
GO TO THE LINE ON THE RIGHT, AND WAIT FOR THE WHITE BUS.
SO DID I JUST GET NAILED, OR WHAT...?
NEXT!

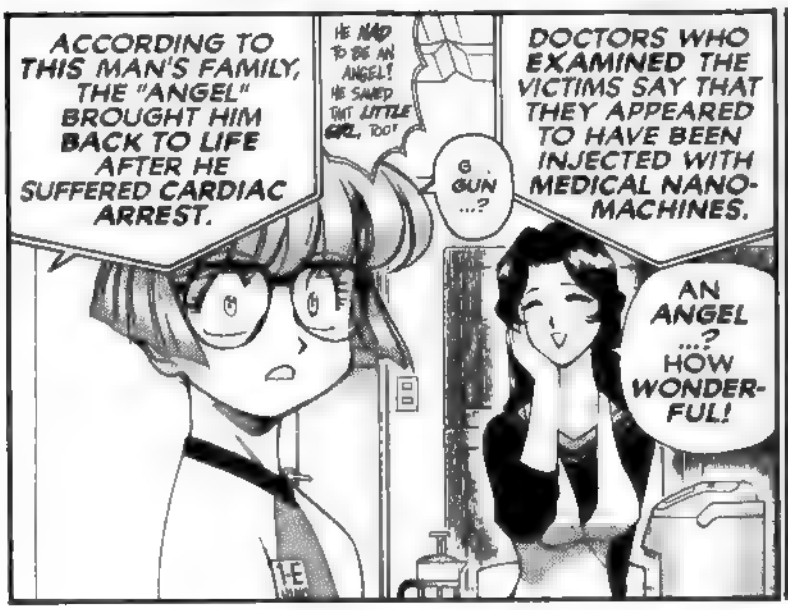
BREEP
FINE. NEXT!
KANO

HERE YOU GO, DEAR.
WHEE! AUNTIE REIKO'S KILLER CHEESE-CAKE!
NO POINT IN BROODING, HMM? YOU CAN'T LET ALL THIS GET YOU DOWN, AKANE.
BESIDES, I'M SURE THAT YOUR SISTER IS FINE...SHE SIMPLY CAN'T PHONE OUT FROM THAT ORBITAL ELEVATOR BASE...!
UM... RIGHT. SURE ...!
SUGAR, PLEASE?


AND NOW, AN UPDATE ON THOSE REPORTED SIGHTINGS OF A MYSTERIOUS, SO-CALLED "BLACK ANGEL."
DBC NEWS

?


HERE, WE SEE ACTUAL VIDEO FOOTAGE TAKEN BY A BYSTANDER, SHOT IN AISEI CITY IN KANAGAWA PREFECTURE, WHICH WAS DEVASTATED BY THE MOUNT FUJI SHOCKWAVE. ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESS REPORTS...
...THE SO-CALLED "ANGEL" SUPPOSEDLY HEALED INJURED CITIZENS JUST BY TOUCHING THEM.

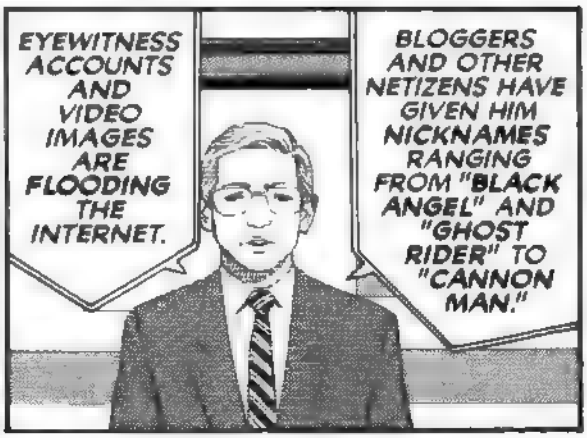

ACCORDING TO THIS MAN'S FAMILY, THE "ANGEL" BROUGHT HIM BACK TO LIFE AFTER HE SUFFERED CARDIAC ARREST.
HE HAD TO BE AN ANGEL! HE SAVED THAT LITTLE GIRL, TOO!
G GUN ...?
DOCTORS WHO EXAMINED THE VICTIMS SAY THAT THEY APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN INJECTED WITH MEDICAL NANO-MACHINES.
AN ANGEL ...? HOW WONDER-FUL!

IT'S TRUE! HER CHEST WAS CRUSHED, SHE COULDN'T BREATHE...BUT HE JUST LAID HANDS ON HER AND SUDDENLY SHE WAS FINE! IT'S A MIRACLE!
HI! ♥

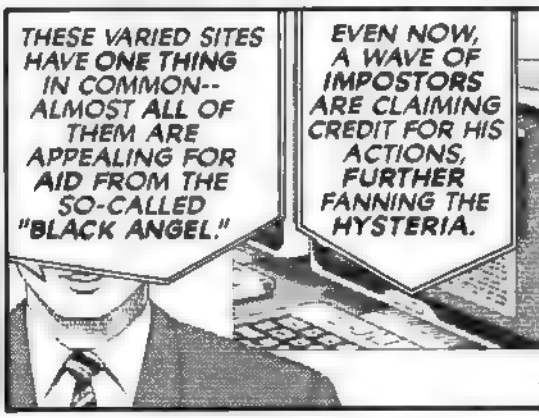
DUDE'S AWESOME, MAN! HE KICKED 'FALDIE ROBOT BUTT!
THEY COULDN'T EVEN TOUCH HIM!
Victor

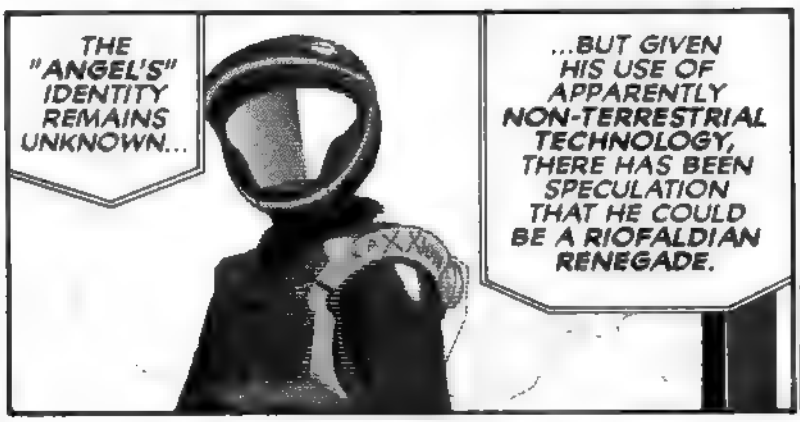
WITNESSES CLAIM THAT THE MAN IN BLACK LITERALLY "SHRUGGED OFF" A WAVE OF RIOFALDIAN TERMINAL DRONES...
...AND FLEW AWAY ON THE STRANGE VEHICLE SEEN HERE...

...BUT ONLY AFTER SHOOTING DOWN A SQUADRON OF THE DRONES' AERIAL TRANS-PORTS!


EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS AND VIDEO IMAGES ARE FLOODING THE INTERNET.
BLOGGERS AND OTHER NETIZENS HAVE GIVEN HIM NICKNAMES RANGING FROM "BLACK ANGEL" AND "GHOST RIDER" TO "CANNON MAN."

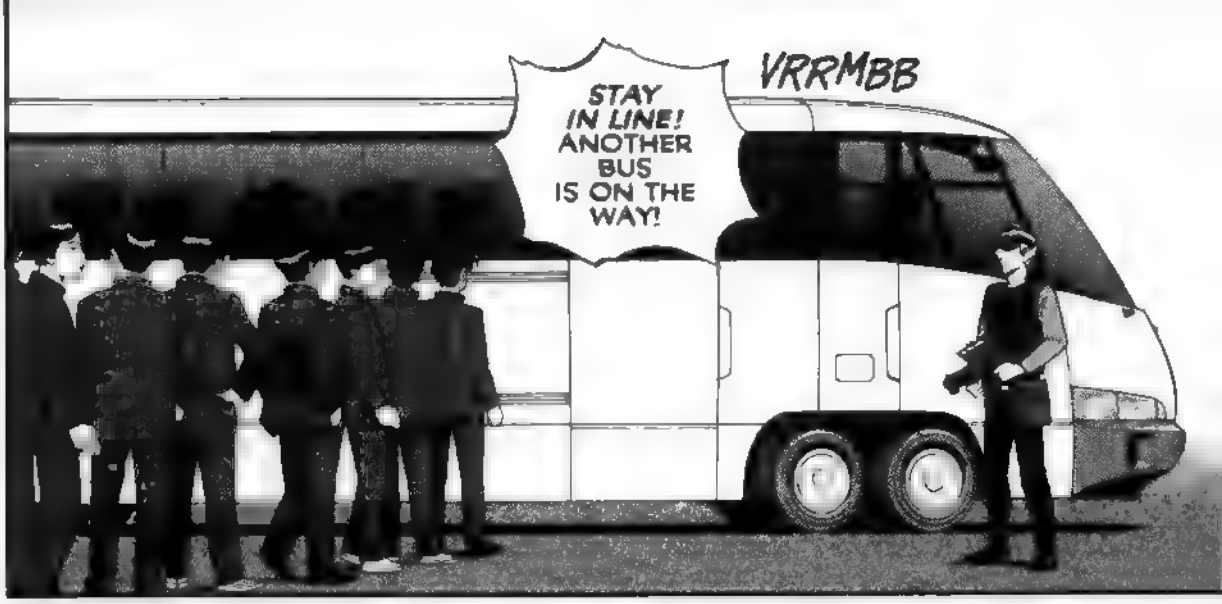
IMPROMPTU FAN CLUBS ARE SPRINGING UP ALL ACROSS THE PLANET...
...WHILE SOME RELIGIOUS SITES ARE EVEN HAILING HIM AS A "NEW MESSIAH."

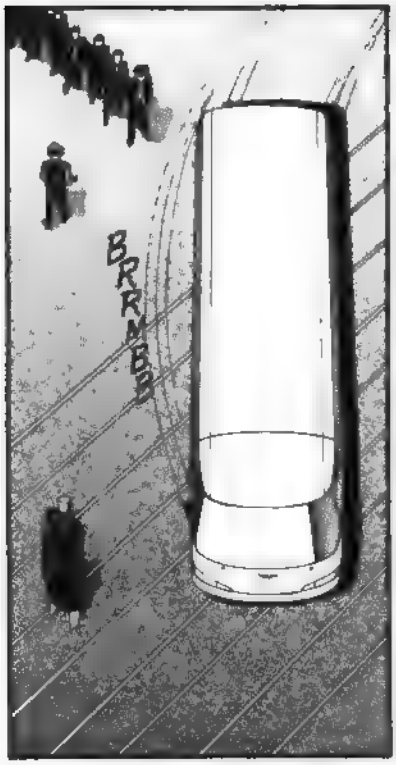

THESE VARIED SITES HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON-- ALMOST ALL OF THEM ARE APPEALING FOR AID FROM THE SO-CALLED "BLACK ANGEL."
EVEN NOW, A WAVE OF IMPOSTORS ARE CLAIMING CREDIT FOR HIS ACTIONS, FURTHER FANNING THE HYSTERIA.


THE "ANGEL'S" IDENTITY REMAINS UNKNOWN...
...BUT GIVEN HIS USE OF APPARENTLY NON-TERRESTRIAL TECHNOLOGY, THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT HE COULD BE A RIOFALDIAN RENEGADE.

BEEP!
YOU'VE GOT E-MAIL!

GOOD-NESS... WHAT IS THIS ABOUT ...?
=BING= DOWNLOAD COMPLETE.
OH, MY... AH, AKANE ...?
THE SCHOOL AUTHORITIES ARE LOOKING FOR YOU.
HAHH ...?!
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS STUDENT?
CASIO
DID SOME-THING HAPPEN AT SCHOOL, DEAR...?
UM... AH...
W-WELL... ACTUALLY...
...SOME-THING REALLY AWFUL HAPPENED...
SSH
GOINK


VRRMBB
STAY IN LINE! ANOTHER BUS IS ON THE WAY!

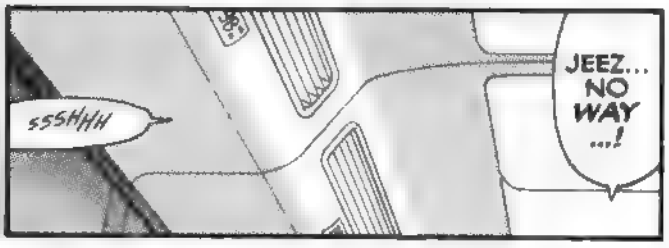

BRRMBB

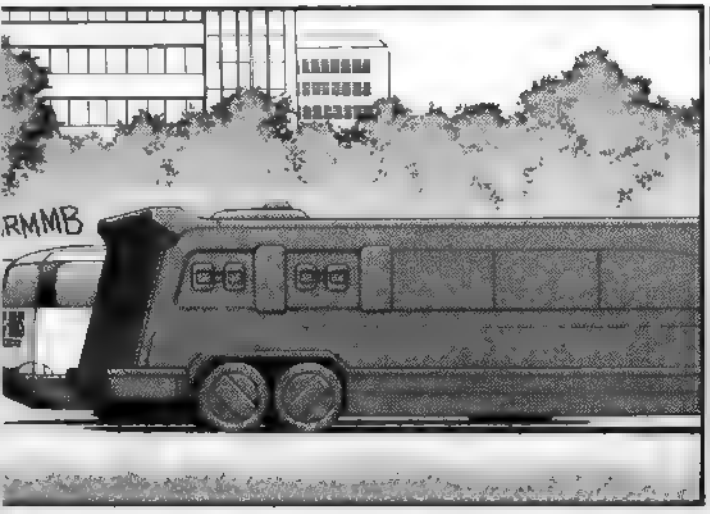
HOW MANY MATCHES DID WE GET?
37, SIR.
TOO DAMN MANY... WE ONLY BROUGHT ONE BUS.

SORRY, SIR, BUT WE COULDN'T RETRIEVE ENOUGH VIDEO FROM DRONE 105 TO REFINE THE PARAMETERS ANY FURTHER.
BUT IF WE FOLLOW ORDERS AND TERMINATE EVERYONE WHO MATCHES THE APPROXIMATE BODY TYPE, THEN WE'LL HAVE TO--

ORDERS ARE ORDERS!
JUST KEEP THE BODIES OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL WE'RE FINISHED HERE.

WHERE ARE THEY TAKING US. ?
T-TO A CONCENTRATION CAMP, OR SOMETHING ...?

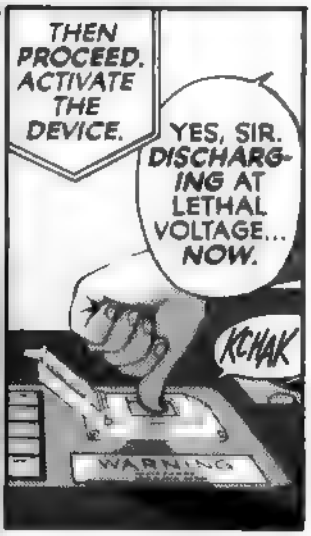

SSSHHH
JEEZ... NO WAY ...!

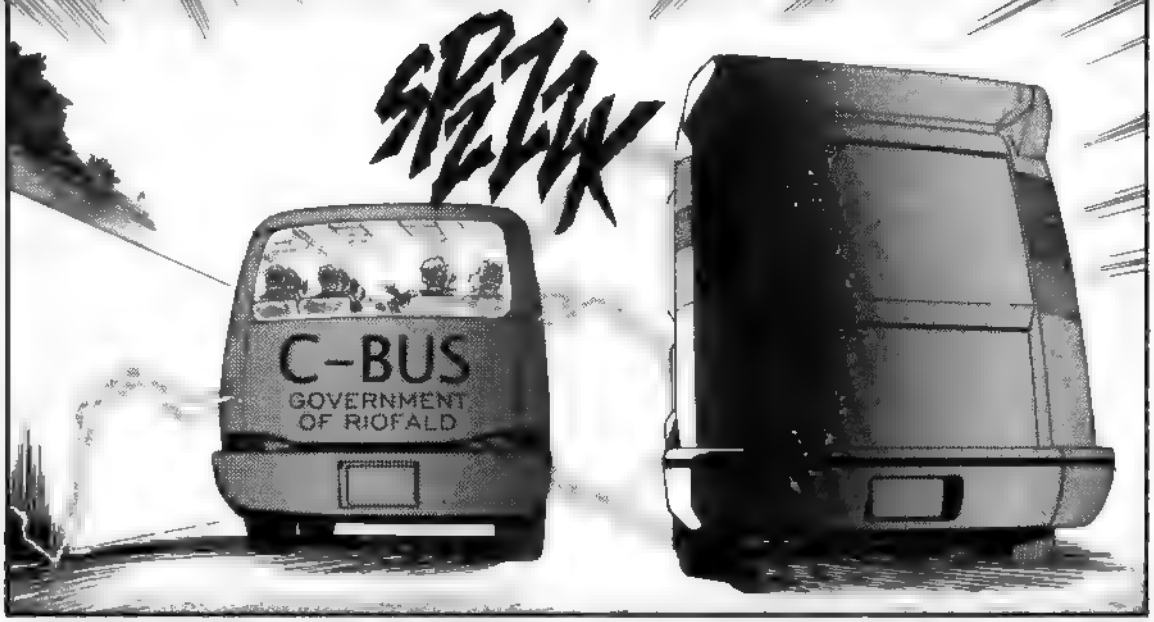

RMMB

HUH? WHY ARE THEY STOP-PING?
....
LOOK... THEY PARKED BEHIND THAT TRUCK...

HOW'S IT GOING?
NO PROB-LEM, SIR.

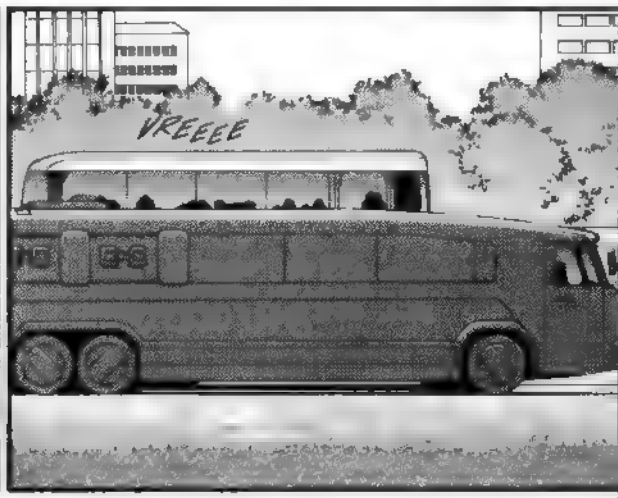
WE'VE BEEN PUMPING IN THE GAS FOR NEARLY TWO MINUTES, SO FAR.
THEY SHOULD ALL BE OUT BY NOW.

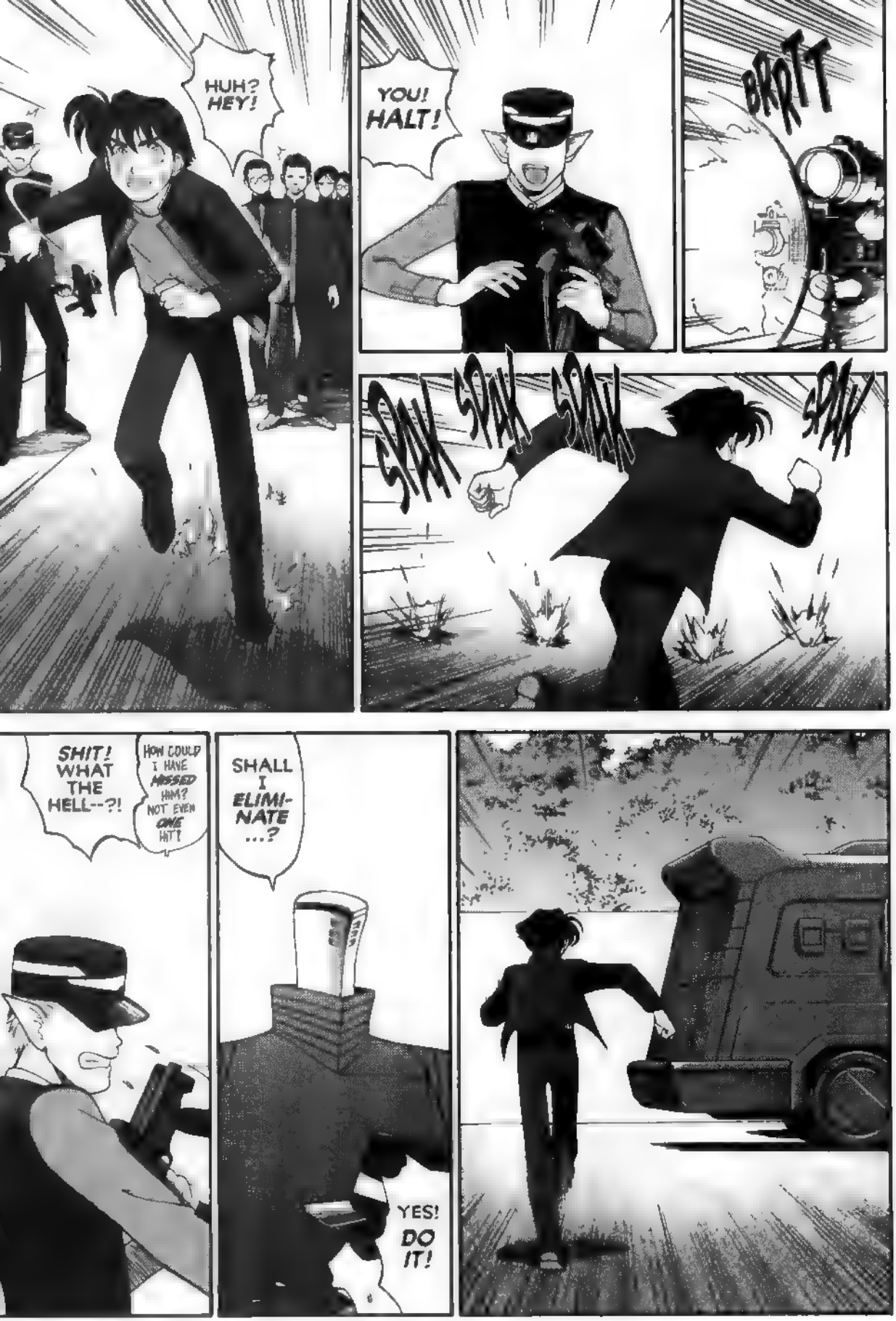

THEN PROCEED. ACTIVATE THE DEVICE.
YES, SIR. DISCHARG-ING AT LETHAL VOLTAGE... NOW.
KCHAK
WARNING


SPLAT
C-BUS
GOVERNMENT OF RIOFALD

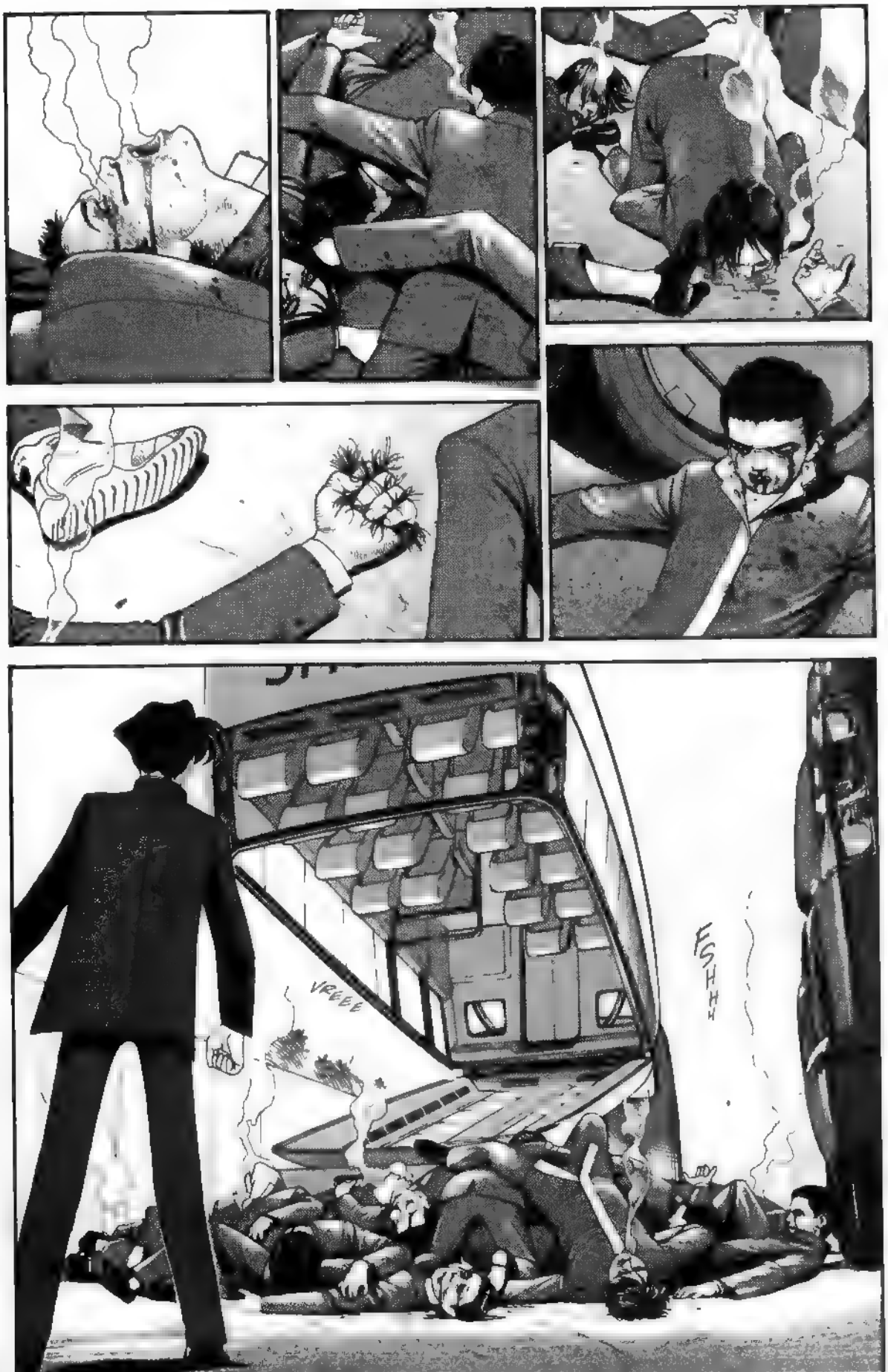
I CAN'T FIGURE WHY WE GOT PICKED OUT.
IT'S KINDA WEIRD WHY US?
YEAH, WE'RE ALL FROM DIFFERENT CLASSES AND GRADES...

HEY, KANO... DID YOU DO SOMETHING STUPID AGAIN, MAYBE?
HEH... NOT ME, MAN.
HEY...DID YA NOTICE WE ALMOST LOOK LIKE BROTHERS OR SOMETHING?
WE'RE ALL THE SAME HEIGHT AND BUILD


VREEEE

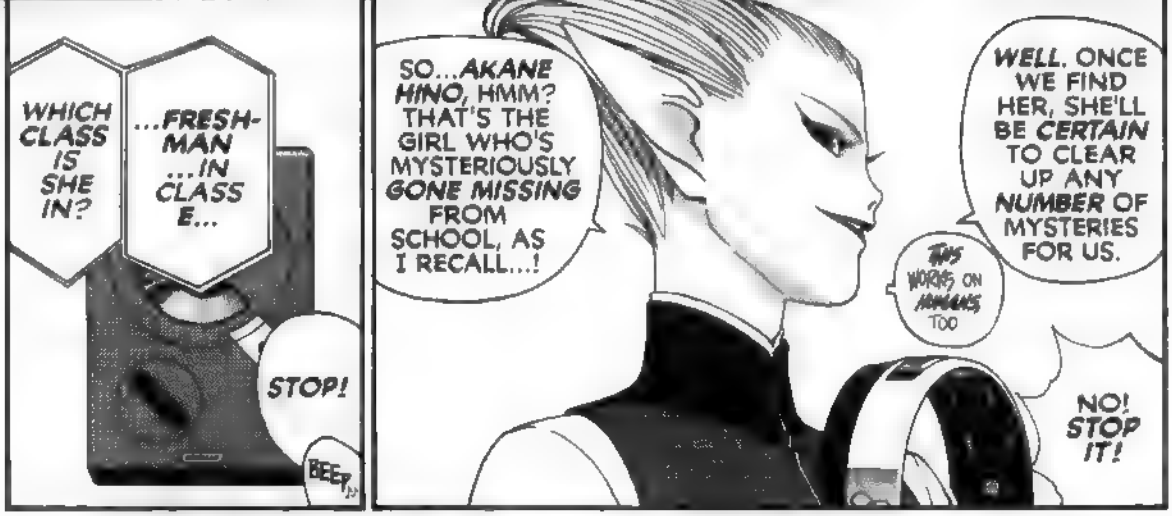

HUH? HEY!
YOU! HALT!
BRRT
SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK
SHIT! WHAT THE HELL--?!
HOW COULD I HAVE MISSED HIM? NOT EVEN ONE HIT!
SHALL I ELIMI-NATE ...?
YES! DO IT!

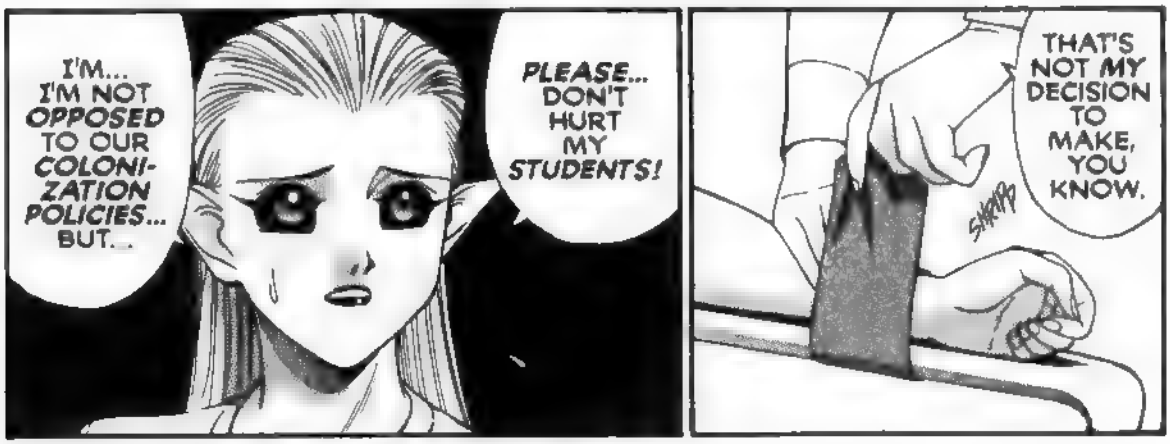
HEY, LOOK! THEY'RE SHOOTING AT THAT KID!
HE'S ESCAPING!
DID THEY HIT HIM ...?
NO! HE'S STILL RUN-NING!
UH OH... THAT DRONE TROOPER THING IS GOING AFTER HIM!
HE'S DEAD MEAT, MAN... SHIT!
SHRK'K


VRRBB
FSHHH

AH --?
AAAAA!
THOKK
AAGK!
KRAKK
MMG
SPINE BROKEN. HEART STOPPED. TARGET TERMINATED.
GOOD WORK. NOW, BRING THE BUS BACK AROUND TO FINISH OFF THE REST OF THEM...
?
HEY... WHAT IS THAT BUS DOING ...?
SEEMS LIKE THE BACK OF IT IS...LIFTING UP, OR SOMETHING...

?!
AH ...?
THANK YOU FOR SHARING, MS. LEEFREH KIN'BA.
SH... SHARING ...?
CARE TO LISTEN?
PLAY-BACK, FROM MARKER THREE.
BEEEP
I SEE...THEN ONE OF THE STUDENTS KNOWS THE IDENTITY OF THE MAN IN THE BLACK SUIT?
YES... SHE... TOLD ME SO...
AND WHO IS THIS STU-DENT?
HER NAME IS... AKANE... HINO...
OH ...!


WHICH CLASS IS SHE IN?
...FRESHMAN ...IN CLASS E...
STOP!
BEEP
SO...AKANE HINO, HMM? THAT'S THE GIRL WHO'S MYSTERIOUSLY GONE MISSING FROM SCHOOL, AS I RECALL...!
WELL, ONCE WE FIND HER, SHE'LL BE CERTAIN TO CLEAR UP ANY NUMBER OF MYSTERIES FOR US.
THIS WORKS ON HUMANS TOO
NO! STOP IT!


I'M... I'M NOT OPPOSED TO OUR COLONIZATION POLICIES... BUT...
PLEASE... DON'T HURT MY STUDENTS!
SHRPP
THAT'S NOT MY DECISION TO MAKE, YOU KNOW.

BUT LOOK AT EARTH'S HISTORY...AND OUR HISTORY, AS WELL. IN TIME, POPULATIONS ALWAYS RISE UP AGAINST COLONIALISM...!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED THE HUMANS' GOOD WILL TO HELP SUPPRESS THESE UPRISINGS!
WE NEED TO HAVE THE MORAL COURAGE TO REJECT GOVERNING THEM BY TERROR!
A PRETTY SERMON... BUT IT COMES A BIT TOO LATE, I'M AFRAID.
WE JUST EXECUTED THIRTY-SEVEN OF "YOUR" STUDENTS.

EXE-CUTED?! BUT... WHY ...?!

AH, PARDON ME... MAKE THAT THIRTY-*EIGHT*. I FORGOT ONE WAS KILLED TRYING TO ESCAPE.

I HAVE RECORDS OF THE *EXECU-TIONS*, TOO. CARE TO SEE...?

PLAY-BACK, *VID-FILE EIGHTEEN.*

VMMM

SEE? THESE ARE THE STUDENTS WE JUST *ELIMINATED* AT YOUR SCHOOL. NOT MANY.

N-NO ...!

SCARCELY WORTH GETTING *UPSET* ABOUT, REALLY. AFTER ALL, THERE ARE *SEVEN BILLION* OF THESE CREATURES ON THIS PLANET... *FAR* TOO MANY, OBVIOUSLY.

VMMM

CONSIDERING THAT THERE WILL BE *FIVE MILLION* OF OUR COLONISTS IN THE FIRST WAVE ALONE, WE NEED TO *PRUNE* THE HUMANS' POPULATION CONSIDERABLY... BY *FIVE BILLION*, AT LEAST, I WOULD SAY.

OF COURSE, THEY WON'T GO TO *WASTE.*

OH *NO*... THAT'S *HIROAKI*... AND *KOSUKE*

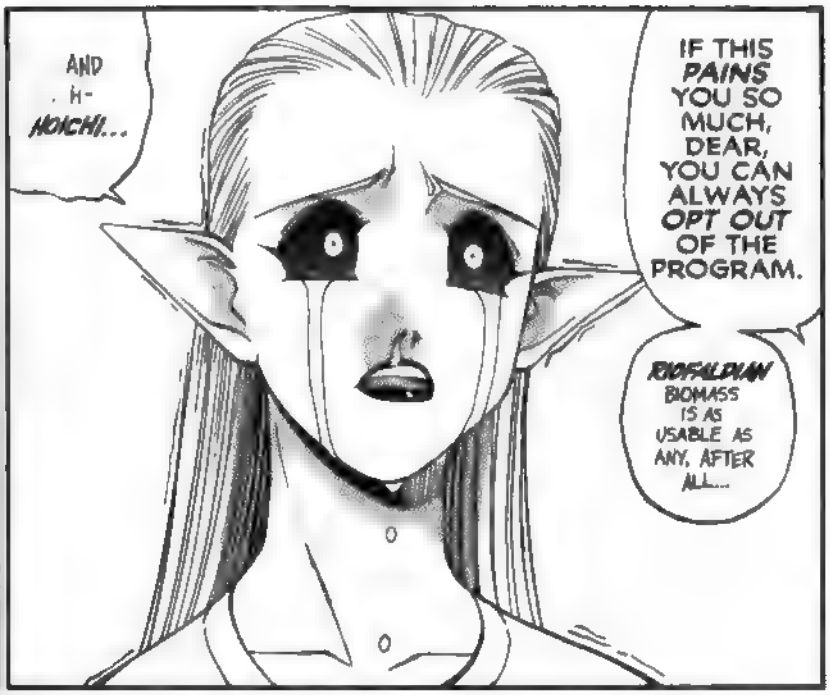
AND *AKIKO*

AGRICULTURAL *FERTILIZER*... LIVESTOCK FEED...RAW BIOMASS FOR INDUSTRIAL *BIOENGINEER-ING*...

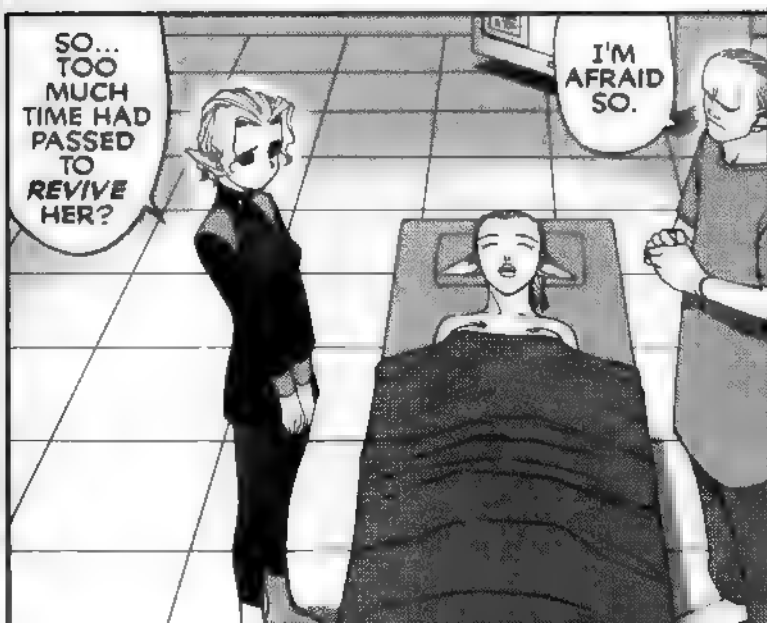
VMMM

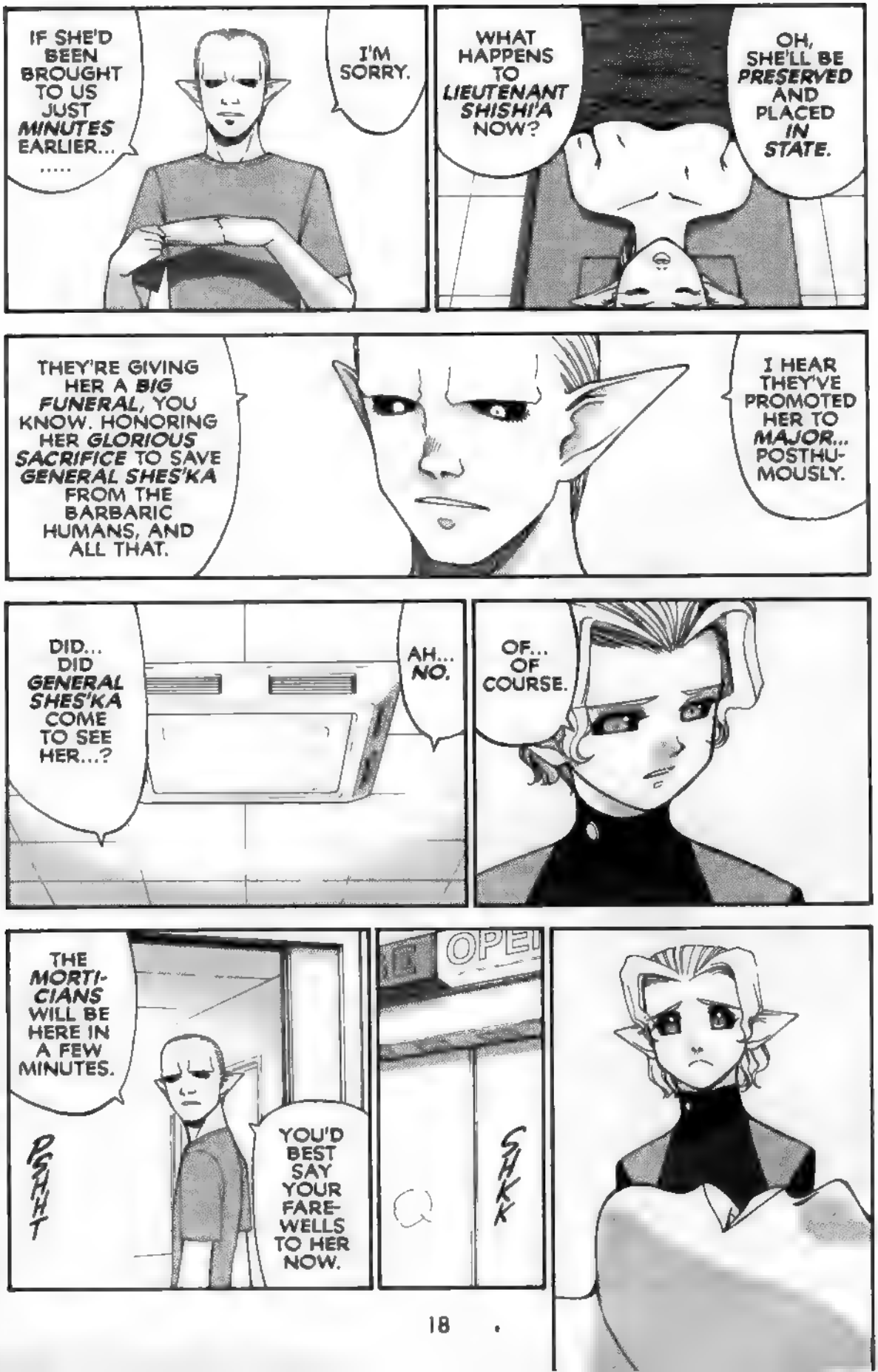
VMMM

WE'LL USE THE HUMANS WE KILL TODAY FOR A FIRST TEST OF THE *PROCESSING PLANTS.*

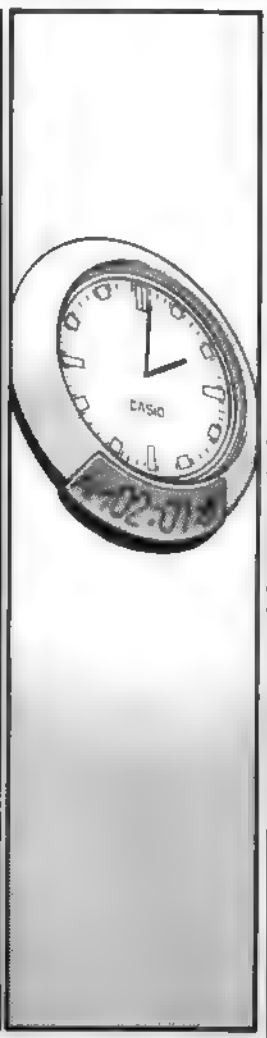

AND . H- *HOICHI...*
IF THIS *PAINS* YOU SO MUCH, DEAR, YOU CAN ALWAYS *OPT OUT* OF THE PROGRAM.
BIOFALPIAN BIOMASS IS AS USABLE AS ANY, AFTER ALL...

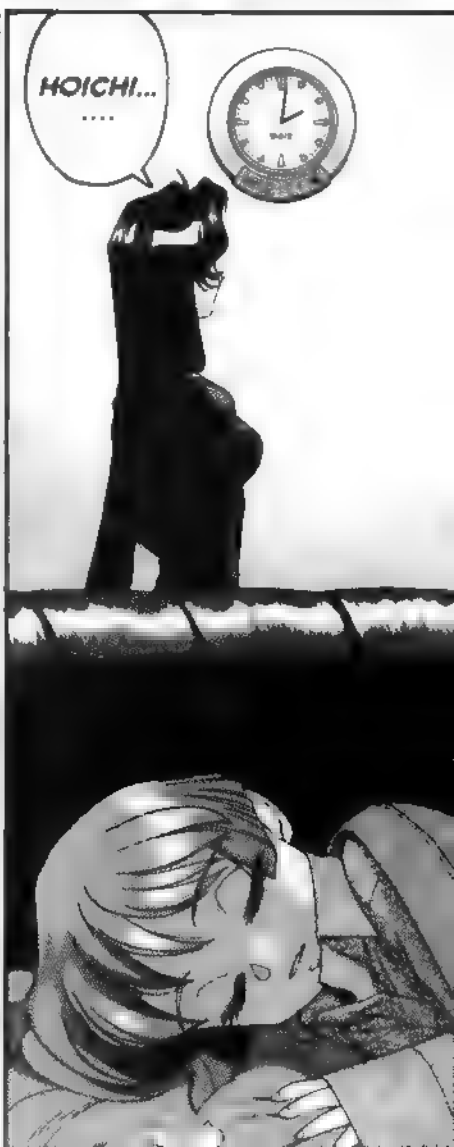
OPEN


SO... TOO MUCH TIME HAD PASSED TO *REVIVE* HER?
I'M AFRAID SO.


IF SHE'D BEEN BROUGHT TO US JUST *MINUTES* EARLIER...
.....
I'M SORRY.
WHAT HAPPENS TO *LIEUTENANT SHISHI'A* NOW?
OH, SHE'LL BE *PRESERVED* AND PLACED *IN STATE.*
THEY'RE GIVING HER A *BIG FUNERAL*, YOU KNOW. HONORING HER *GLORIOUS SACRIFICE* TO SAVE *GENERAL SHES'KA* FROM THE BARBARIC HUMANS, AND ALL THAT.
I HEAR THEY'VE PROMOTED HER TO *MAJOR*... POSTHU-MOUSLY.
DID... DID *GENERAL SHES'KA* COME TO SEE HER...?
AH... *NO.*
OF... OF COURSE.
THE *MORTI-CIANS* WILL BE HERE IN A FEW MINUTES.
PSHHT
YOU'D BEST SAY YOUR FARE-WELLS TO HER NOW.
OPEN
SHKK

OH,
BREIZO...


CASIO


HOICHI...
....

OWW...! DAMN.. I REALLY HURT

BODY FEELS ALL... STIFF...

HUH? I'M... ALIVE ..?

BUT WHY...? I WASN'T WEARING THE GUNNER SUIT...!

DID THE DAMN ALIENS SCREW UP SOME-HOW ?

OR... MAYBE I STILL GOT SOME NANO-MACHINES IN ME ?

JEEZUZ! WHAT'S THAT SMELL ...?

AND WHERE THE HELL AM I ?

CONTAINER EIGHT IS NOW *LOADED* AND READY FOR *TRANSPORT*, SIR!

OPEN ME A SECURE LINE TO *GENERAL SHES'KA!*

COLONEL PURU'UB, SIR? *GASTA'AF* IS NOW CLEARED FOR LAUNCH!

WELL DONE!

GENERAL ...? PREP *COMPLETE*, SIR!

WE CAN *DEPLOY* THE UNIT AT ANY TIME.

EXCEL-LENT.

I'VE SECURED YOU A *PRIORITY* ENTRY WINDOW. LAUNCH *IMMEDI-ATELY.*

NOW LAUNCHING FROM GATE ONE.
TRANSFERRING EMERGENCY PROGRAM CONTROL FROM ORBITAL BASE THREE TO EARTH STATION.

W3
02
03
04

SS-CLASS HEAVY TRANSPORT GASTA'AF-- YOU ARE CLEARED FOR ATMOSPHERIC ENTRY!

DESTI-NATION-- JAPAN, KANTO REGION...

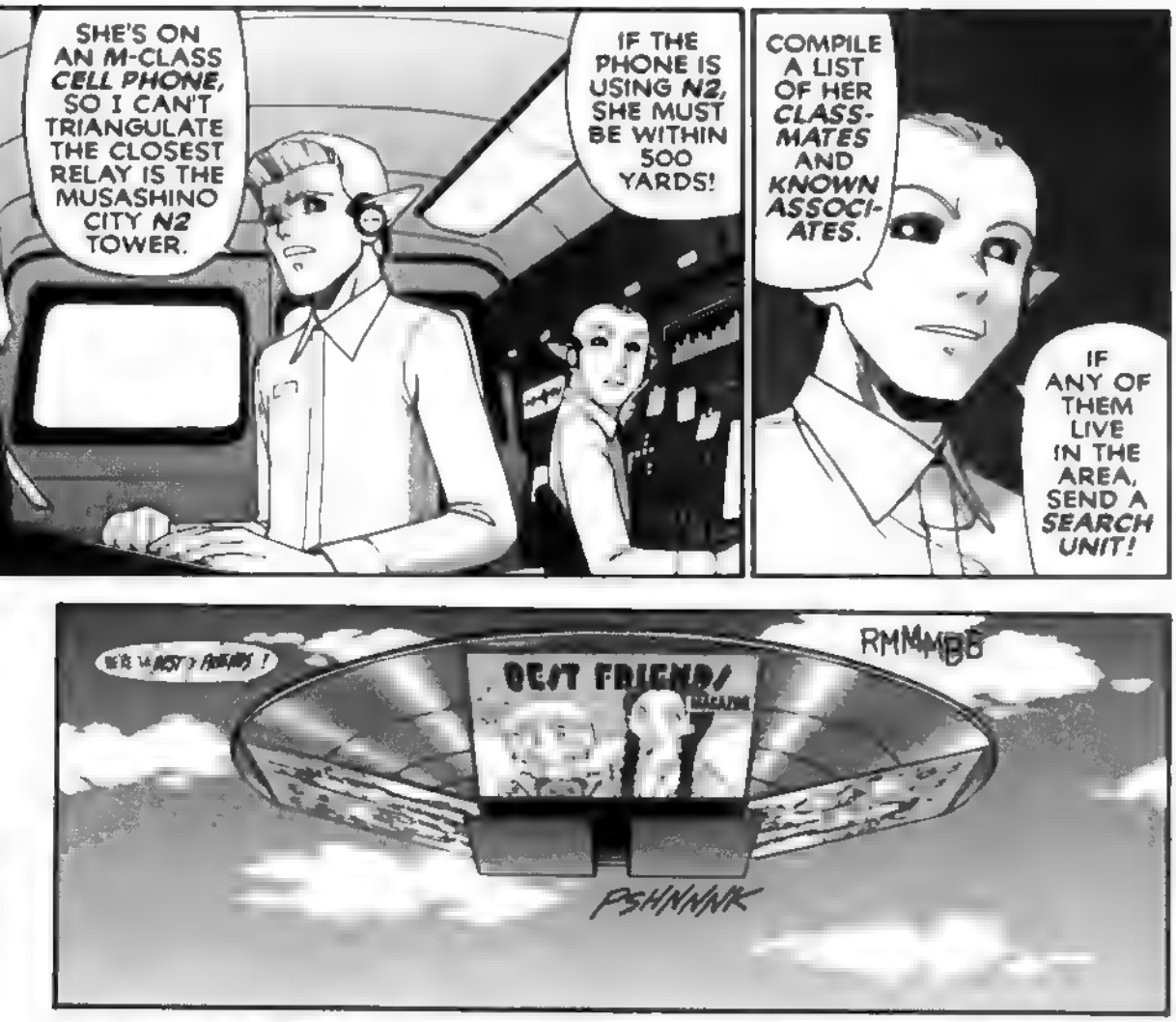
MORNING, AUNTIE REIKO!
GOOD MORNING, DEAR.
WOW! WHAT A FEAST ...!
YOU MADE ALL OF THIS JUST FOR ME ...?
OH, WE ALWAYS EAT LIKE THIS, AKANE.
AWE-SOME! IT'S LIKE STAYING AT A HOTEL!
AT OUR PLACE, IT'S JUST MILK AND CEREAL ALL THE TIME...
ITA-DAKI-MAAA-SU!*
AH, AKANE... YOUR PARENTS PHONED, AFTER YOU WENT TO BED.
I TOLD THEM THAT I HADN'T SEEN YOU, BUT... ARE YOU SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA...?

* Japanese "grace" before a meal

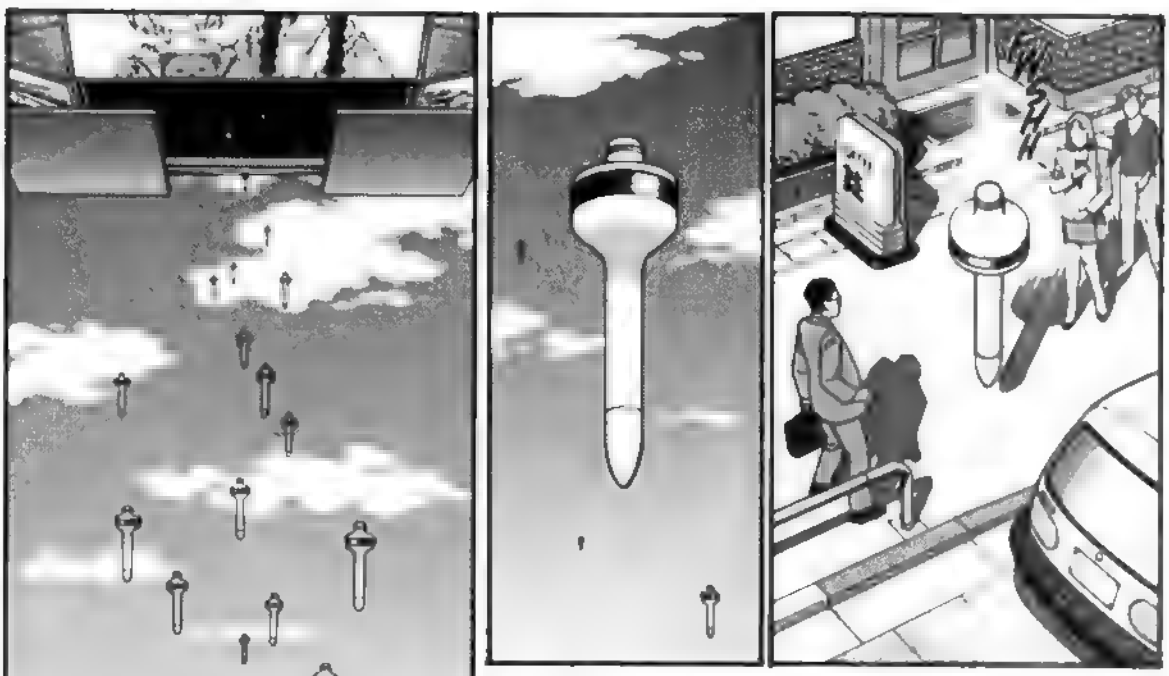
UM...WELL, YEAH, AUNTIE. I MEAN, OUR PHONES HAVE TO BE BUGGED, BY NOW.
MOM WILL BE WORRIED, THOUGH, WON'T SHE...? HMM.
WELL, MAYBE I'LL USE A PUBLIC TERMINAL LATER, AND SEND HER AN E-MAIL.
--WAS KILLED TODAY AT HOWA HIGH SCHOOL.
HUH ...?
THE STUDENT REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE A RIOFALDIAN GOVERNMENT IDENTITY CHECK AND WAS SLAIN BY A DRONE TROOPER.
ANOTHER THIRTY-SEVEN STUDENTS WERE TAKEN AWAY FOR QUESTIONING ON SUSPICION OF COLLABORATING WITH THE SO-CALLED "BLACK ANGEL."
Victor
IN OTHER NEWS, A MAJOR OVERHAUL OF THE NATION'S MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IS EXPECTED TO--
NO NAMES ...?
I HOPE HOICHI ISN'T--
HEY, WAIT A SEC!
SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE POSTED THE STUDENTS' NAMES ON THE MEDIA CLUB WEBSITE!
VWIP
CAN I PLUG INTO YOUR HOME PORTAL, AUNTIE?!

BINGO!
BREEEP
THE MEDIA CLUB!
THAT'S KIMIKO FOR YOU.. A REAL REPORTER!
LET'S SEE, HERE...
.... OH!
TAKASHI IR
HOICHI KAN
KOSUKE KI
OH, NO... THEY DID TAKE HIM...
WHY HAVEN'T THEY CALLED ME...?
HOW CAN THEY ARREST A MINOR AND NOT EVEN NOTIFY HIS PARENT...?
UM, AUNTIE REIKO... WE'RE UNDER ALIEN OCCUPATION, REMEMBER?
WE DON'T EVEN HAVE "CIVIL RIGHTS" ANYMORE
VHPP
TH-THEN... THAT MEANS...
KLIK
...THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEY WANT TO CATCH THAT BLACK-SUITED FELLOW, CAN'T THEY?
DETAINING STUDENTS... OR ANYONE ELSE, I SUPPOSE... .....
!!

NO! TH- THEY WOULDN'T ...!
MOM! DAD!
BEEP
BEEP
I...I CAN'T BELIEVE...
...THEY WOULDN'T TAKE MY PARENTS... WOULD THEY...?
HELLO, HINO RESI-DENCE...
MOM! YOU'RE THERE!
AKANE ...?!
NO PICTURE
WHERE ARE YOU? I'VE BEEN WORRIED TO DEATH!
OH, THANK GOD... YOU'RE OKAY!
NO PICTUR
UM... DID THE RIOFAL-DIAN POLICE SHOW UP?
THEY WERE HERE LAST NIGHT LOOKING FOR "MISS AKANE HINO"...! WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, YOUNG LADY...?
OH, NO...! Y-YOU'RE NOT WITH A BOY, ARE YOU?
MOM, GET REAL! I'M FINE, BUT THE ALIENS ARE AFTER ME, SO I'M STAYING AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE
WHO IS HE?! TELL ME!!
AKANE HINO IS CALLING HOME, SIR!
FROM WHERE? DO YOU HAVE A FIX?


SHE'S ON AN M-CLASS CELL PHONE, SO I CAN'T TRIANGULATE THE CLOSEST RELAY IS THE MUSASHINO CITY N2 TOWER.
IF THE PHONE IS USING N2, SHE MUST BE WITHIN 500 YARDS!
COMPILE A LIST OF HER CLASS-MATES AND KNOWN ASSOCI-ATES.
IF ANY OF THEM LIVE IN THE AREA, SEND A SEARCH UNIT!

RMMMB6
PSHNNK


WSH

OOH...I *KNEW* IT! THERE'S SOME KIND OF *SPY ROBOT* OUT THERE...

BUT *HOW,* DEAR? YOU DIDN'T *SAY* YOU WERE HERE, DID YOU...?

THEY CAN TRACE *CELL PHONES,* I GUESS. I'M *SORRY,* AUNTIE REIKO

NO, YOU WERE *WORRIED* ABOUT YOUR MOTHER, AKANE. YOU *HAD* TO CALL HER.

BUT NOW, WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY DON'T *FIND* YOU...

WE COULD BUILD A *SECRET CHAMBER* PERHAPS ?

UM...THIS ISN'T A *GAME,* YOU KNOW...

BUT THIS IS *JUST* LIKE A *SPY MOVIE,* DON'T YOU THINK? WHAT *FUN!* ♥

BUT...WHAT ABOUT *HOICHI...?* WHEN I CALLED THE *POLICE* AND THE *SCHOOL,* THEY DIDN'T KNOW *ANYTHING* ABOUT WHERE HE WAS TAKEN...!

AKANE, DEAR...I'M NOT GOING TO GET *HYSTERICAL* JUST BECAUSE SOME SILLY *ALIENS* ARRESTED HOICHI.

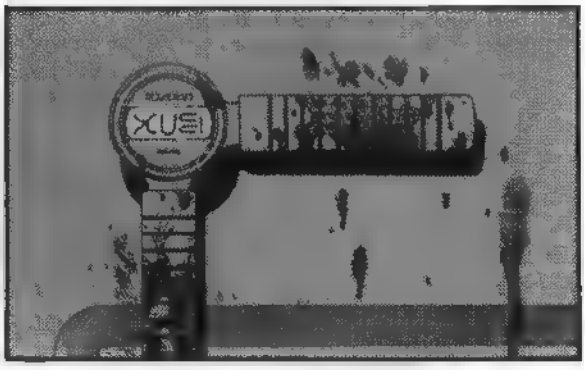
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE CAN *DO* FOR HIM RIGHT NOW IS TO *STAY CALM,* AND WAIT TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENED.

BELIEVE ME...OUR *HOICHI* IS FAR MORE *CAPABLE* THAN YOU CAN EVEN *IMAGINE!*

TO BE CONTINUED...!

-HAHH-
-hunn-

DAMN IT--!



IF I'D KNOWN *THIS* WOULD HAPPEN, I WOULD'VE *KEPT* THAT DAMN *GUNNER GLOVE*...

OH, BUT YOU *DID* KEEP IT, MASTER HOICHI

I.. ISAKA?

WHERE ARE YOU--?
IF YOU'RE HERE, WHY AREN'T YOU SAVING THESE POOR BASTARDS?
OH, THAT HIGH-VOLTAGE CURRENT BURNED OUT THEIR NEURONS, I'M AFRAID. EVEN IF I HAD ENOUGH NANOMACHINES I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO REVIVE THEM
AND BESIDES, THE "DISPOSALS" ARE JUST BEGINNING, YOU KNOW.
EVERY FAILED GUERILLA ATTACK, EVERY BOTCHED DISSIDENT STRIKE PROVIDES MORE, AH, RAW MATERIAL FOR LIVESTOCK FEED AND FERTILIZER.
THAT'S WHY THE RIOFALDIANS BUILT THIS FACILITY... IT'S A HUMAN CORPSE PROCESSING PLANT.
P-PROCESS-ING--?
THIS IS A COLONY PLANET, AFTER ALL. TO OPEN UP SOME SPACE, THE RIOFALDIANS NEED TO BRING DOWN THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION BY MILLIONS AT A TIME...
MIL-LIONS?! BUT--
KCHNGG
FLMPP
!!
AH...I DO BELIEVE THE PROCESS-ING HAS STARTED.

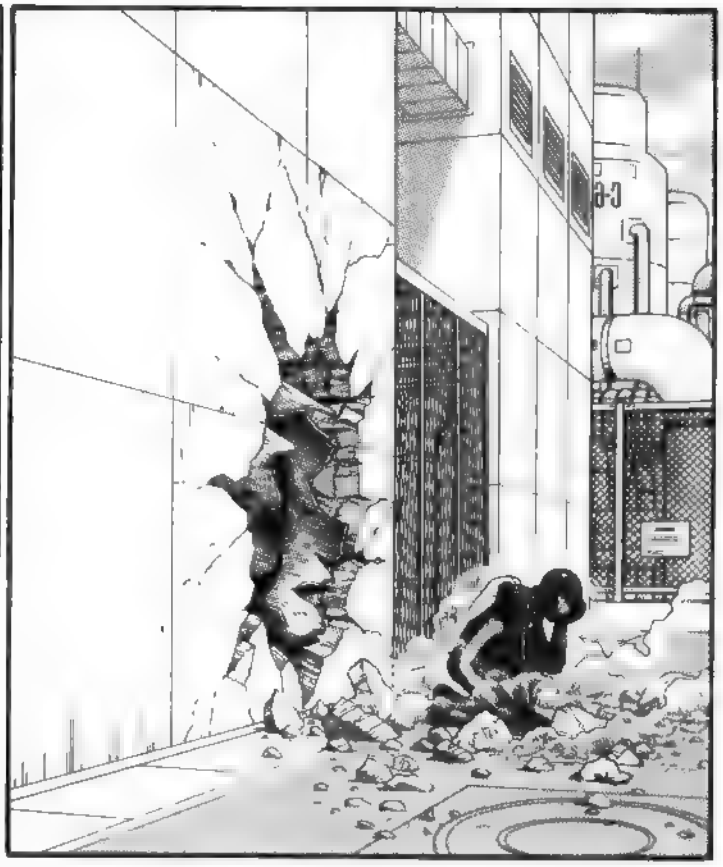
THEY'RE GRINDING UP THE BODIES?!
HOLY CRAP!
ISAKA! I NEED THE GLOVE, NOW!
GRRNCH
OH, I ALREADY GAVE IT BACK TO YOU, MASTER HOICHI
WHAT ...?!
YOU SEE, YOUR JACKET IS A NANOMECH MASS RESERVOIR I ASSEMBLED MYSELF
??
HOW--
WHIP
SHH

"AH ...!"
WHOA...SO THE NANOS IN MY JACKET ARE FORMING THE GLOVE, THEN?
YES, I PRO-GRAMMED THEM TO REASSEMBLE THEMSELVES AS YOUR GUNNER GLOVE WHEN WE HUGGED.
PERHAPS I COULD EXPLAIN ALL THIS LATER ...?
UH... RIGHT!
GRRNNCCHH
WH-WHOA--!
I'D SUGGEST YOU TRANSFORM RIGHT AWAY, MASTER HOICHI OR
GRRNNCHH
RRMBBB
RRMBBB
RRMBBB
RRMBBB

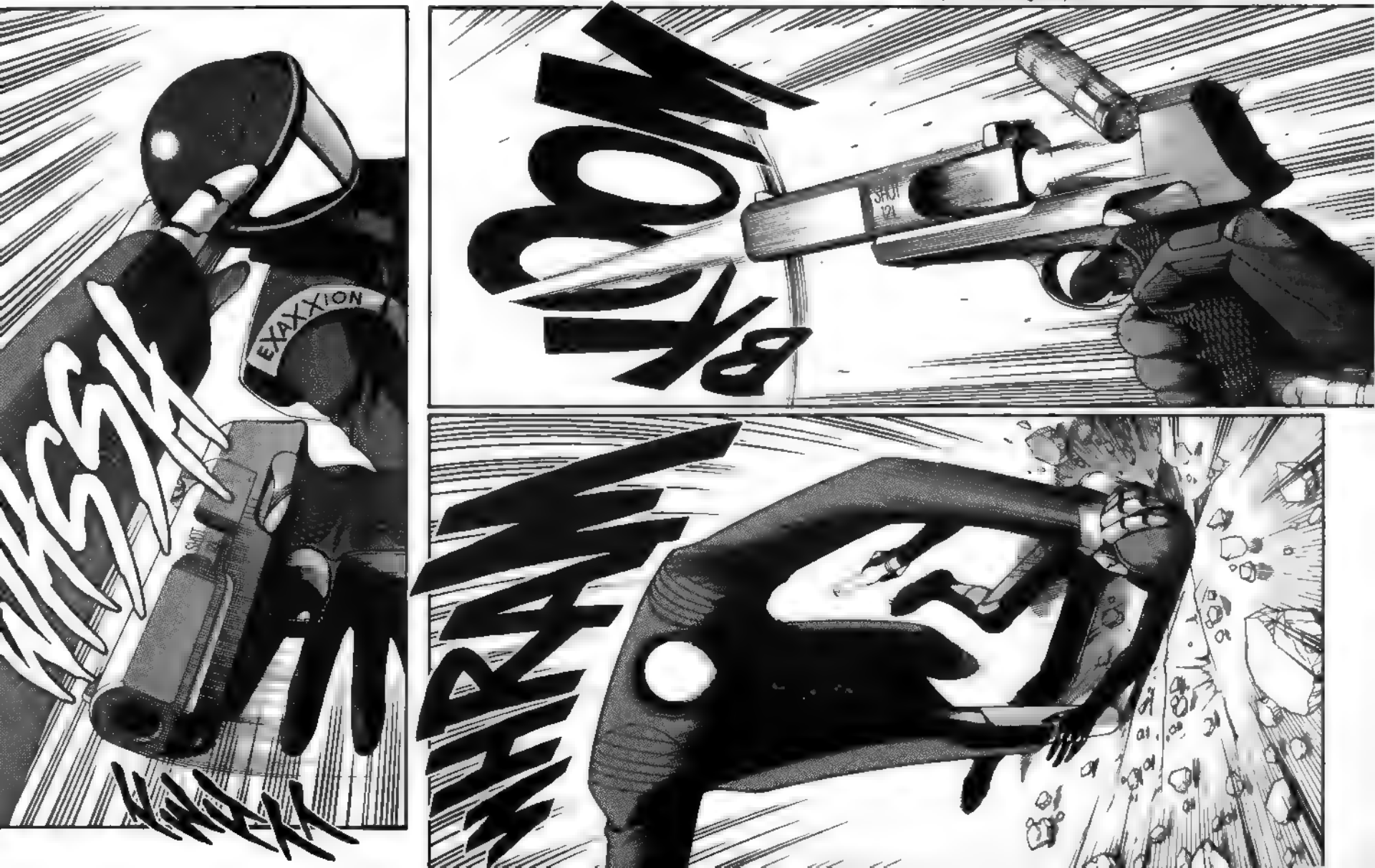
KRANG
SCREEK
1

WE'VE GOT TROUBLE IN CHAMBER ONE...
ON ITS TRIAL RUN? DAMN PIECE OF JUNK...!

SENSORS READ THE BLADES ARE JAMMED.
I'M NOT CHECKING THAT STINKING PIT.
DON'T WORRY-- I'LL SEND A BARU-CHAD'D.



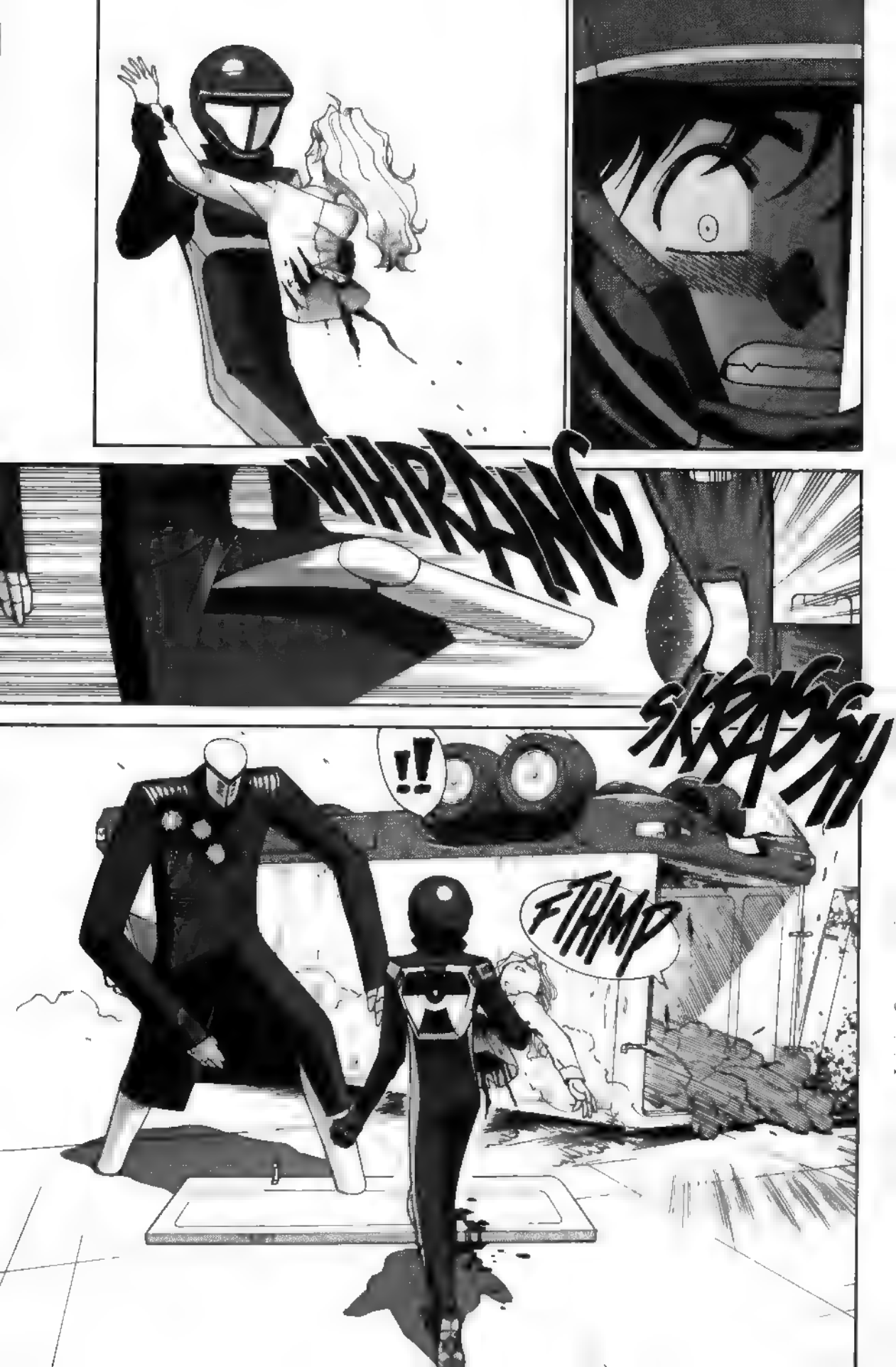
VREEE!
POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION CONFIRMED FOR X-DESIGNATED TARGET.
WHB
WILL APPREHEND.
GUN SET!
WHSSH


EXAXXION
HISSH
BOOM
HARRM

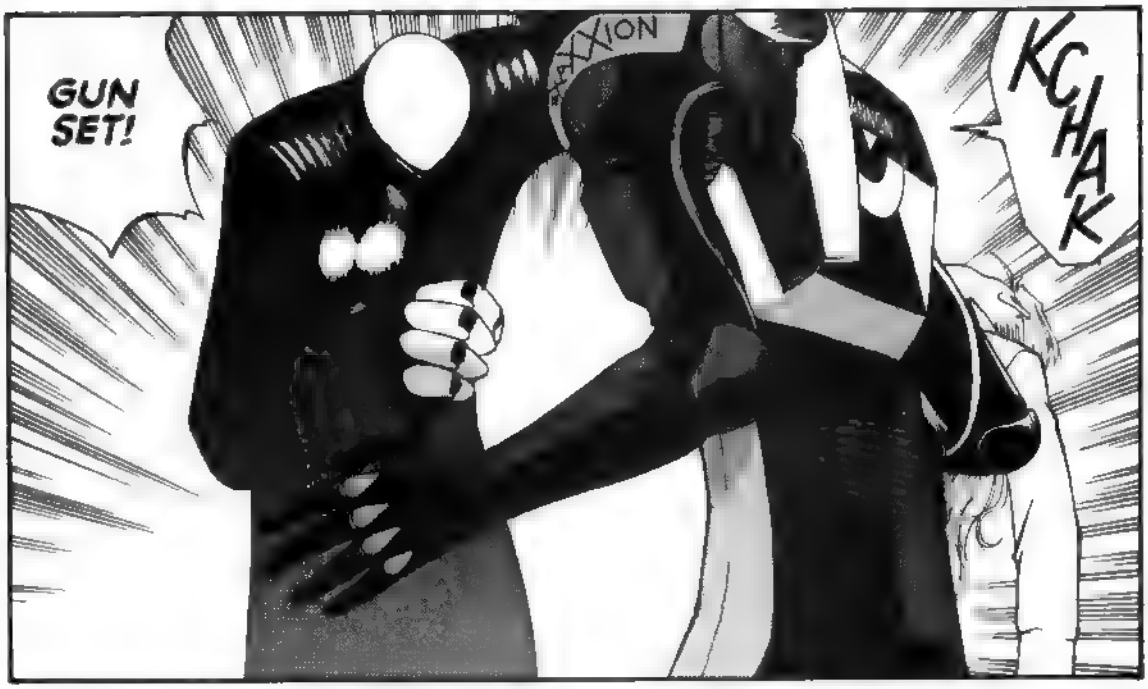
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
VREEE
HUH ...?
HE'S STILL NOT DEAD?!
WHOOK

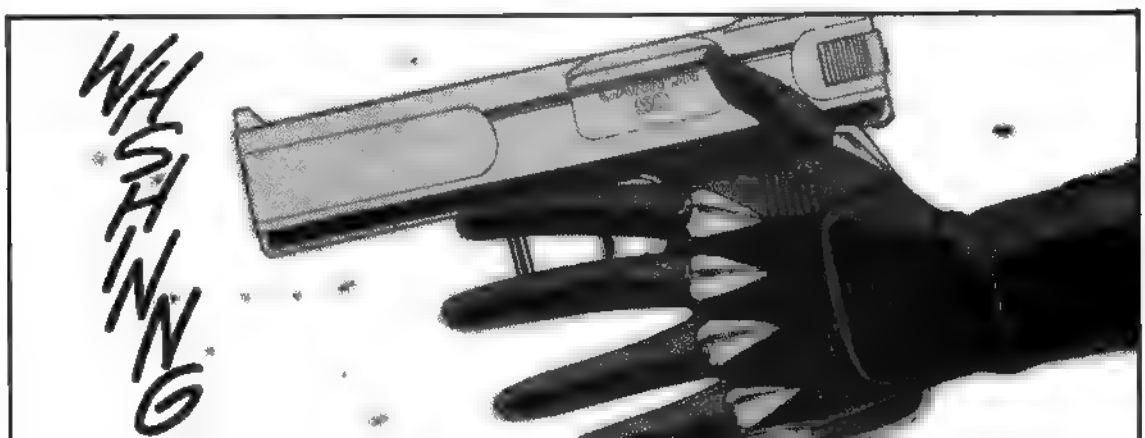
SKRANGG
KRNKK
WHOA --!
SKRASH
!!
IXION

WHOOSH
BLANG
ISAKA! WHY ISN'T HE GOING DOWN?!
YOUR RIGHT-HAND PISTOL IS A SHOTGUN, WITH RATHER LIMITED PENETRATION, I'M AFRAID...!
NOW YOU TELL ME!
GUN CLOSE!
KANGG
!!
A KID ...?
LOOK OUT!!
YOU GOTTA GET--


WHRANG
SKRASSH
!!
FTHMP

AH...!
AAA!
HRAAAAA!


GUN SET!
KCHAK


WHSHINNG

SKRASSH
♪BINGG♫
YOU DID IT!♥
VREEE
KSSH
EEEEK!
HMM? AKANE ...?

EEK...!
AUNT REIKO! HELP!
FWIP FWIP
VMMMM
VWIP!
MGFF
OH...! AKANE!
VMMMM
APPRE-HENDED: AKANE HINO-
GOOD WORK!
VM
THAT'S HER, ALL RIGHT.
BRING HER IN HERE, M-13.

WE'VE SECURED AKANE HINO, COMMAND. NOW RETURNING TO BASE.
VRMMM
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
WHOOM

KRANGG
WHEW
EXAXXION
THNKK
THNKK
SKRFEE
ISAKA ...?
YES?
SO THEY'RE BUTCHERING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, TOO?
OF COURSE THEY ARE, ALL OVER THE WORLD. THAT'S JUST ONE LOAD OF BODIES.
ISAKA... COME HERE. NOW.

AH... PARDON?

VORPP

GET YOUR AIR-BIKE ASS *OVER* HERE, *RIGHT NOW!*

VORP

SPAKK!

HE'S GOT A *DEFENSE FIELD?!*

HOW COULD A *HUMAN* HAVE THAT LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY . . .?

SEND IN A *BARU-CHAD'D*... AND ARM IT WITH A LEVEL 3 *KINETIC-IMPACT* WEAPON!

YES, SIR!

SO YOU'LL PILOT EXAXXION FOR US AGAIN...?

GODDAMN RIGHT I WILL...I'LL *STOMP* THIS STINKING PLACE *FLAT!*

THEY'RE NOT JUST *INVADERS*... THEY'RE A BUNCH OF *BUTCHERS!*

*OF COURSE. INVASIONS **ALWAYS** INVOLVE MASS SLAUGHTER OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, MASTER HOICHI.*

SHUT UP AND *GET* HERE, WILL YOU?!

SINGLE-GAUGE DU ROUND: NO EFFECT.*
GET HIM TO RETURN FIRE AND EXPEND HIS AMMO.
WSHAR
JUST KEEP HIM BUSY UNTIL THE TERMINAL DRONES WE'RE VECTORING IN CAN GET THERE!
HRGG ...!
HE'S USING PROJECTILES, AFTER ALL, SO HIS SUPPLY MUST BE LIMITED...
I SHALL DO SO.

* DU = "Depleted Uranium." GAUGE is the measurement of a shotgun's barrel diameter. A single-gauge shotgun barrel can fire a one-pound lead slug. A two-gauge barrel fires a one-half pound lead slug, continuing on down smaller and smaller. The largest shotgun allowed under law in the U.S. is a ten-gauge firing a 1.6oz lead slug.

WHAK

KTINK

BASTARD! I'M GONNA BLOW YOUR ASS TO--

FWHTT

THARP

!

DON'T EVEN WASTE YOUR AMMO ON THEM.

ISAKA --?
SO-- SHALL WE GO NOW?
KUHAK
GUN CLOSE!
IF WE DON'T HURRY, EXAXXION WILL BE IN DANGER ...!
READY TO MOUNT YOUR SWEET ISAKA, MASTER HOICHI...?
H- HEY! WHAT TH--
FMPD
HISSSS
KOOM

SPRAK
UUWAAA!

PSHTT
ISAKA! WAIT, DAMN IT!
LET ME KILL ONE OF 'EM, AT LEAST!
LOOKING TO VENT ON SOME ALIEN CANNON FODDER, MMM...?
SORRY! RIGHT NOW, IT'S FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAT WE GET YOU TO EXAXXION.
AND SO... AWAY WE GO!
H-HEY! WAIT--!
SHWIPP
FHWSSSHHHM
THE GROUND UNITS ARE FALLING BACK, SIR.
SS-CLASS HEAVY TRANSPORT GASTA'AF, 2000 YARDS AND CLOSING.

1600 YARDS. 900 YARDS

NOBODY KNOWS HOW TO HAVE A LITTLE FUN LIKE *ME*, BY GOD!

AND THIS SET-UP IS JUST *FINE* FOR A SMALL TEAM LIKE US.

NOW, ABOUT *HOICHI*... IS HE BACK IN THE *GAME*, YET?

THOSE BASTARDS'LL THROW SOMETHING *DAMN GOOD* AT US, THIS TIME. STATIC DEFENSE WON'T *CUT IT* ANY MORE...

THIS *ANTIQUE* OP-CENTER IS *SUCH* "OLD-SCHOOL" FUN, MASTER HOSUKE .!

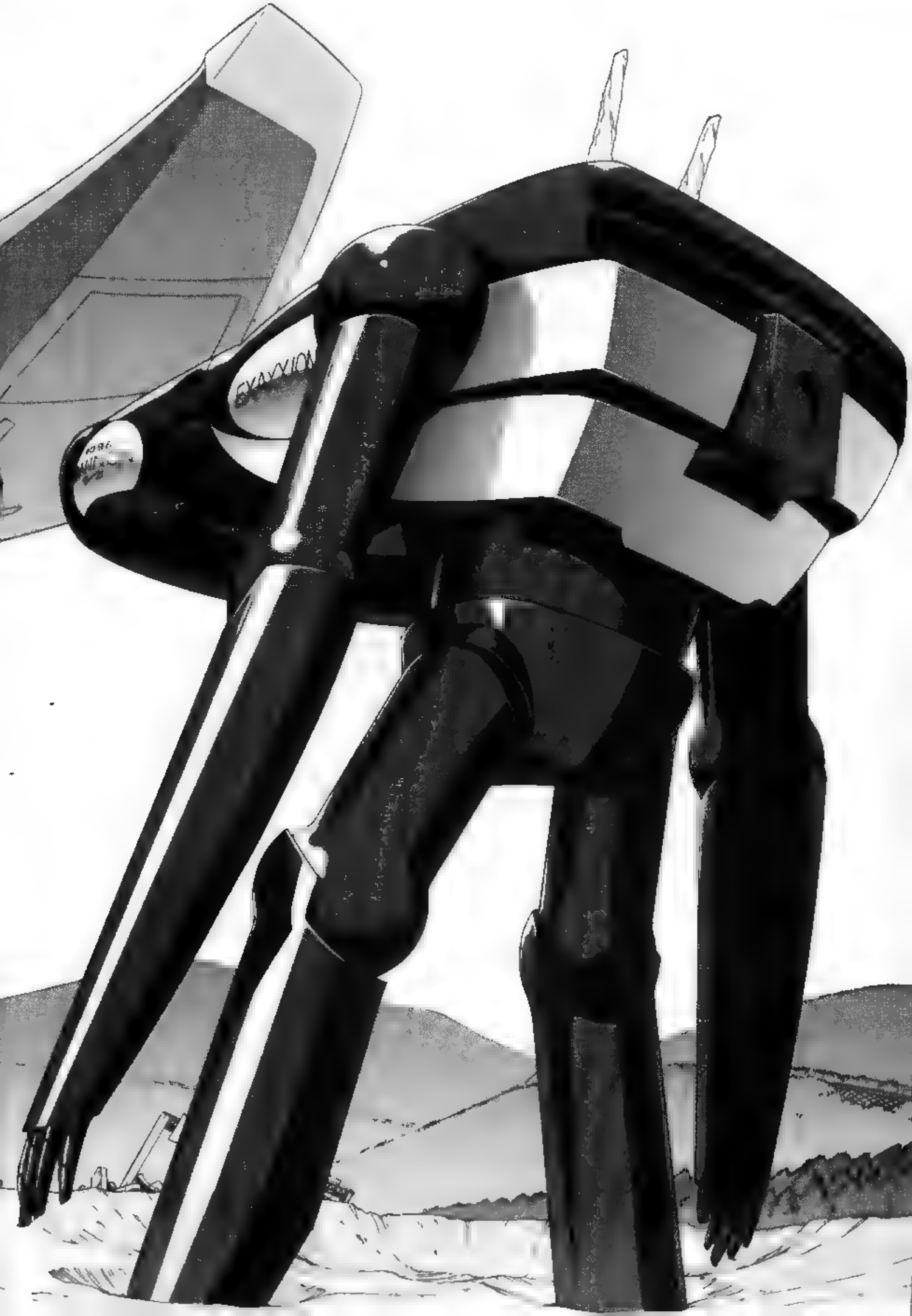
MASTER HOICHI IS INBOUND ON *ISAKA*, SIR. ESTIMATED TIME TO INSERTION IS *TEN MINUTES*.

300 YARDS!

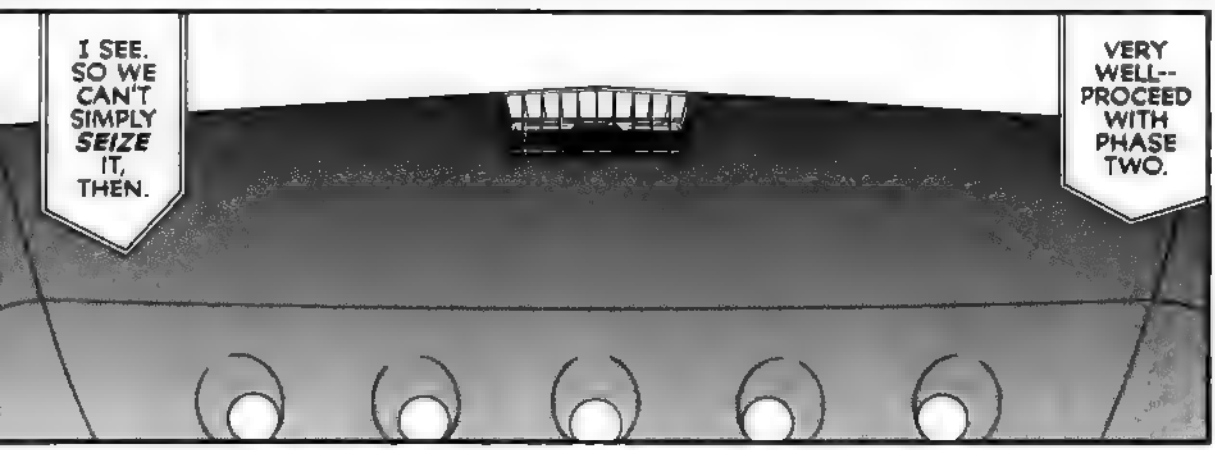
KLAK

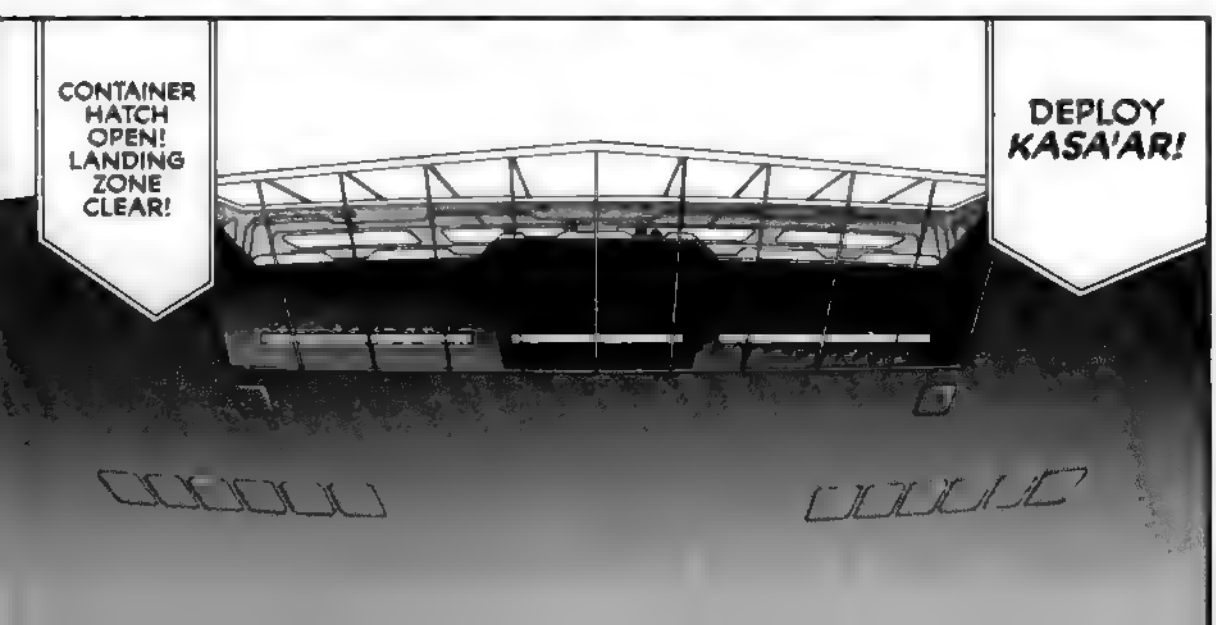
SIR! *GASTA'AF* HAS STOPPED 200 YARDS FROM *EXAXXION!*

PSSHHHNK
KANG



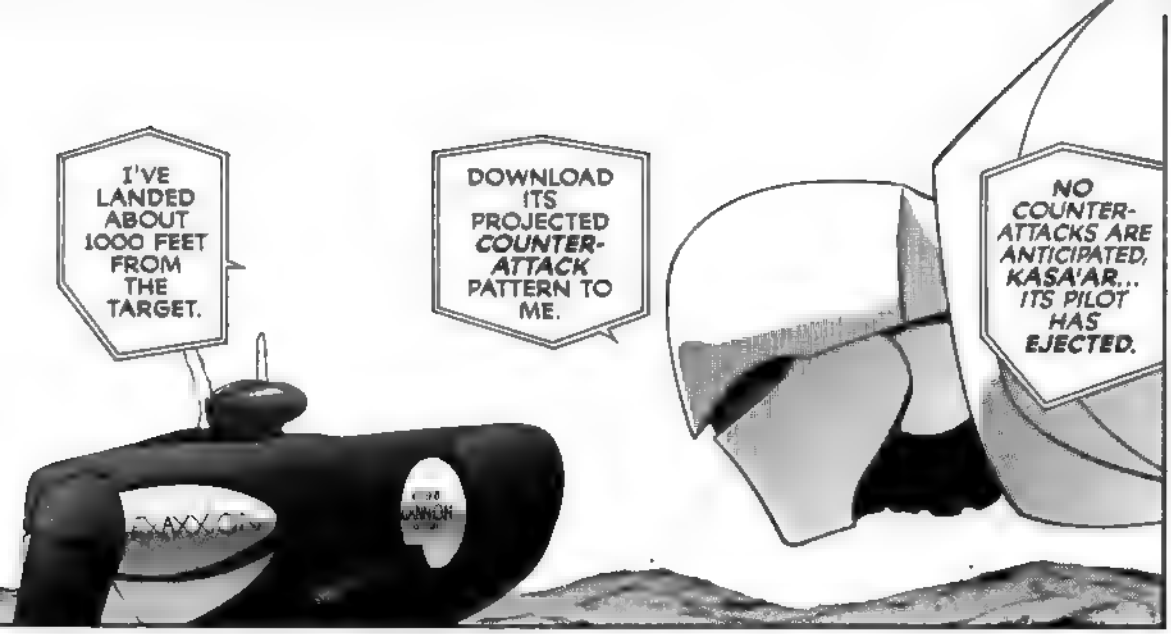
STATUS REPORT ...?
WE UTILIZED OUR MAXIMUM-LEVEL *NEGATIVE-G* LIFTING FIELD ON THE TARGET, BUT ITS GRAVITATIONAL CONTROL SYSTEM *NEUTRALIZED* IT.
WE WERE UNABLE TO LIFT THE ROBOT, SIR.

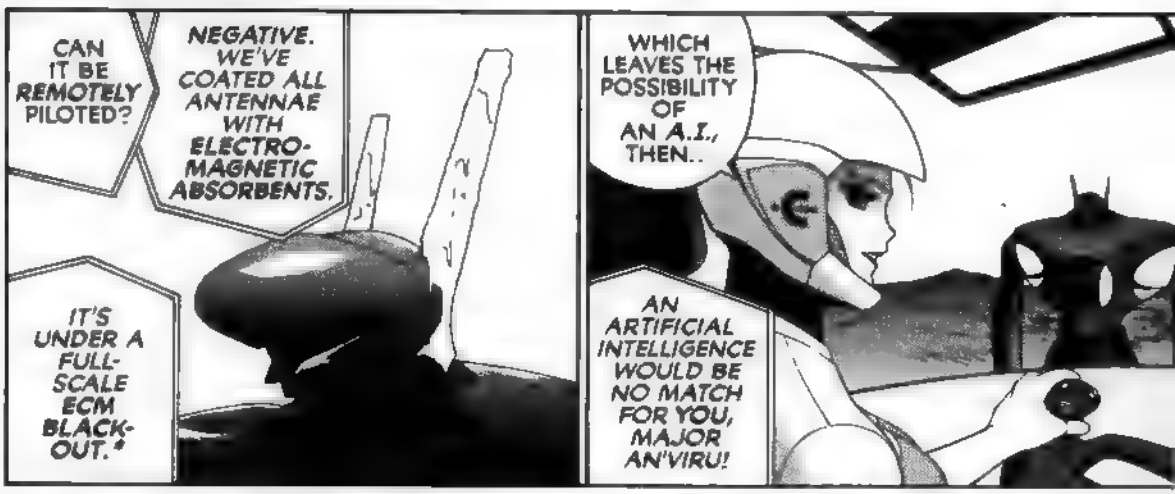

I SEE. SO WE CAN'T SIMPLY *SEIZE* IT, THEN.
VERY WELL-- PROCEED WITH PHASE TWO.


CONTAINER HATCH OPEN! LANDING ZONE CLEAR!
DEPLOY *KASA'AR!*

FWOOSH
KTHOOM

伝説


I'VE LANDED ABOUT 1000 FEET FROM THE TARGET.
DOWNLOAD ITS PROJECTED COUNTER-ATTACK PATTERN TO ME.
NO COUNTER-ATTACKS ARE ANTICIPATED, KASA'AR... ITS PILOT HAS EJECTED.


CAN IT BE REMOTELY PILOTED?
NEGATIVE. WE'VE COATED ALL ANTENNAE WITH ELECTRO-MAGNETIC ABSORBENTS.
IT'S UNDER A FULL-SCALE ECM BLACK-OUT.*
WHICH LEAVES THE POSSIBILITY OF AN A.I., THEN..
AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WOULD BE NO MATCH FOR YOU, MAJOR AN'VIRU!

*ECM: Electronic Counter-Measures, generally used against electronic weaponry such as radar. Used here to block all radio frequency communications.

OF COURSE NOT, BOYS. FOR YOU, I'LL TAKE IT OUT WITH A SINGLE STRIKE!
JUST WATCH FOR CHANGES IN THE XXX UNIT'S RESPONSE.
OUR SCANS SHOW THE ANTI-MATTER GENERATOR IS MOUNTED IN THE ROBOT'S BACK.
DON'T DAMAGE IT OR WE'RE ALL HISTORY!
DON'T YOU WORRY.
THOOM

TO BE CONTINUED...!

2.4
AWAKE
STAGE 2.4

SKANG

SHINGG
EXAXXION
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE ...!
I DIDN'T DAMAGE IT AT ALL?
SHOOOOOOOOOOOOOM
EXAXXION

SYSTEM, OPERATIONAL... MAGNETIZATION LEVEL, YELLOW... NOW COMMENCING DEMAGNETIZATION PROCESS.
BUT, I THOUGHT OUR SHIELDING WAS PERFECT!
FZZK! KSSH
EEK ...!
THAT ROBOT'S GIANT ARM, STRIKING EXAXXION WITH NEAR-SUPER-SONIC VELOCITY ...?
NOW, THAT'S GOING TO TRIGGER ONE HELL OF AN INERTIAL CONTROL SURGE, I'M GUESSING.
SPZZK
SPARK
BOOM
KRAK
BZZZT!
KAKK
AAA --!
HUH?
BUT... THIS REPORT IS DUE TOMOR-ROW...!
SPARK
EEK!
POF

SHREEE
WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP
SHREE
WHUP WHUP WHUP
NO GOOD... THE STICK'S DEAD! PUT IT INTO AUTO-ROTATION, NOW!
HUH? BUT WE'RE TWO KLICKS AWAY FROM THE SITE...!
LOSING ALTI-TUDE ...!
SKRASSH
WHSHHHHHHHHHH
CANNON
XION
KTHOOM

IT MOVED! A.I. ...?
OR JUST AN AUTO-BALANC-ING ROUTINE?
INCREDIBLE... KASA'AR'S STRIKE BARELY STAG-GERED IT...!
OUR SCANS INDICATE THAT THE ENEMY'S ARMOR REMAINS INTACT, SIR.
MAJOR AN'VIRU... REPORT ON KASA'AR'S CONDITION.
LEFT DESTRUCTOR ARM STATUS REMAINS OPTIMAL...NOW DEMAGNE-TIZING FRAME.
THAT MONSTER'S POWER OUTPUT MUST BE PRACTICALLY OFF THE SCALE...
IS IT BEING RUN BY A COMBAT A.I.?
BUT...THAT ROBOT LOOKS VIRTUALLY UNTOUCHED... AFTER A 127,000 TON STRIKE...!
WE'VE ONLY SEEN AUTO-BALANCING, SO FAR. NO SIGN OF--
THEN I'LL USE THRUST-ASSISTED STRIKE MODE ON IT!

MAJOR! THAT COULD WRECK KASA'AR'S ARM...!
WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO WE HAVE, SIR? IF I CAN MAKE THAT BEHEMOTH KEEP ON DISCHARGING, IT'LL FRY!
I'M SURE I CAN OVERLOAD ITS GENERATORS WELL BEFORE MY ARMS GIVE OUT, SIR!
KCHIK
THEN ITS OWN SAFETY CUT-OFFS WILL AUTO-MATICALLY SHUT IT DOWN!
VREEE
WHROOOM
KTHOOM
WHHSH

SKREEEE

BOOM

?!

PSHAKK
BKOOM
ARM NOW BREAKING SOUND BARRIER...

SHRANG
!!
SHIIIINGG
TAXXON

KTHOOM THOOM THOOM

NOW, *THAT'S* MORE LIKE IT! I'M GOING *AFTER* HIM!

CAREFUL, MAJOR! THE PILOT'S RETURNED!

HMM? WHAT'S WRONG WITH *ISAKA...?*

AH...SHE *DID* GET MASTER HOICHI ABOARD *EXAXXION...*

...BUT THEY WERE *HIT* THE SAME INSTANT. MAYBE SHE TOOK THE BRUNT OF THE FIELD SURGE'S *ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PULSE...?*

THINK, LADIES! THAT SURGE MUST'VE BURNED THE RIOFALDIAN'S SIGNAL-BLOCKING *COATING* OFF OF EXAXXION'S ANTENNAS!

TRY GETTING A SIGNAL THROUGH TO THE *COCKPIT,* WHY DON'T YOU?

I'M FILTERING OUT *ECM* TRANS-MISSIONS AND *STATIC* INTERFER-ENCE, SIR...

...BUT EXAXXION IS STILL SO *HIGHLY MAGNETIZED* THAT I CAN'T GET *THROUGH* TO THEM...!

DEMAG CYCLE AT 50%, SIR...

FSHHH

FSHHH

UH.. *ISAKA ...?*

♪ Yesss ...? ♪

GYAAA!
Ho ho ho HOICHI Oh oh oh OKAY kay?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU--?
What what WHAT
Why why WHY
Wrong wrong WRONG?
MAGNETIC LEVEL NOW DROPPING TO GREEN...
BETTER LINK TO THE COCKPIT AND REBOOT ISAKA, THEN, MY SWEET.
YES, SIR!
WAAH!
VREEE

OH, *DEAR...*

"OH, DEAR" MY *ASS--!* WHAT THE HELL--

*HOICHI, MY BOY! BEST **GRIT** THOSE **TEETH**, AS YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET **WHOMPED...!***

SKRANGG

SHIIIINGG

KITHOOM
THOOM
EXAXXION
WHAT...? THE ROBOT'S MOVING DIFFERENTLY, NOW...!
MAJOR AN'VIRU! PROCEED WITH CAUTION ...!
NGHH ...THOUGHT I WAS DEAD AGAIN ...!
AND WE RAMPED UP THE COCKPIT'S INERTIA CONTROL, TOO... DAMN!
WELL, CAN'T WIMP OUT NOW...
...GOTTA BLOW THAT BASTARD AWAY!
KITHOOM
AND STOMP THAT PROCESSING PLANT, WHILE I'M AT IT!

DON'T THINK *GUNS* WILL CUT IT, HERE
...SO, THEN...
...I'LL PUNCH YOUR LIGHTS OUT!
SHNK
RETRACTING *FINGERS* AND ACTIVATING *IMPACT MODE*, MASTER HOICHI
KCHAK
MAJOR! YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH *POWER* TO ENGAGE THAT ROBOT IN *HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT!*
HE PLAYS LIKE AN *AMATEUR*, SIR! I CAN *TAKE* HIM!
FSHOOM
WHOOSH!

SPANG

WRS SHH

SCOSH

WHKOOM

WHRANGG
KCHAK
FZZZZK
SKREEEK
ZZZZRAK
HA! CAN'T DEFLECT LASERS AT CONTACT DISTANCE, CAN YOU?
MAJOR! THIS IS TOO DANGER-OUS! PULL BACK!
HAH! I'LL CUT HIM TO PIECES!
DON'T SCREW WITH ME!

EXAXION

WHOOSH
SKRANGG

N-
NO--!

THIS... THIS CAN'T BE HAPPEN-ING...!

TOKYO OPERATIONS CENTER REPORTING TO GENERAL SHES'KA AT ELEVATOR BASE ONE.

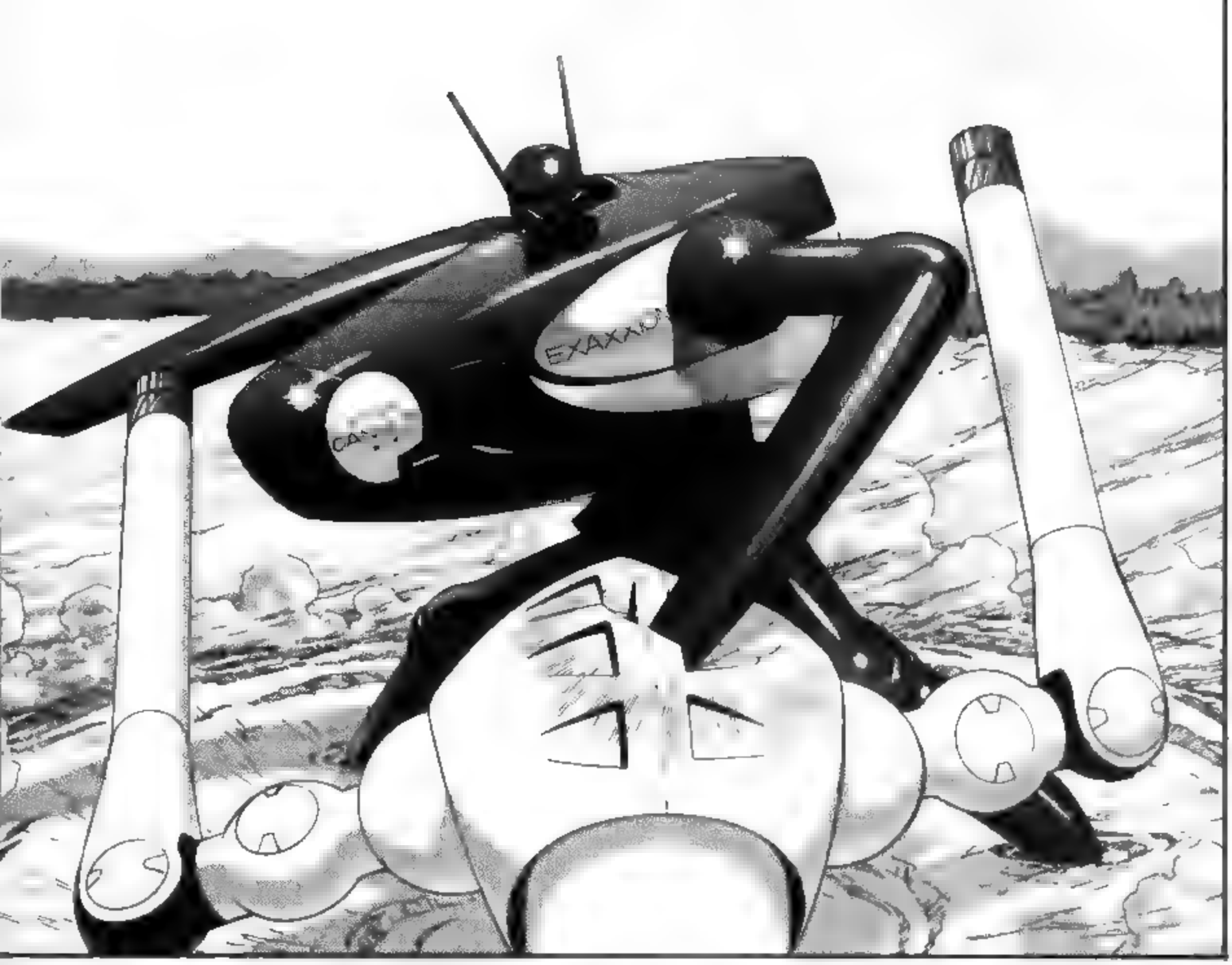
S-CLASS INTERRO-GATION REPORT TO FOLLOW... REQUEST A SECURE LINE.

"BREEP"

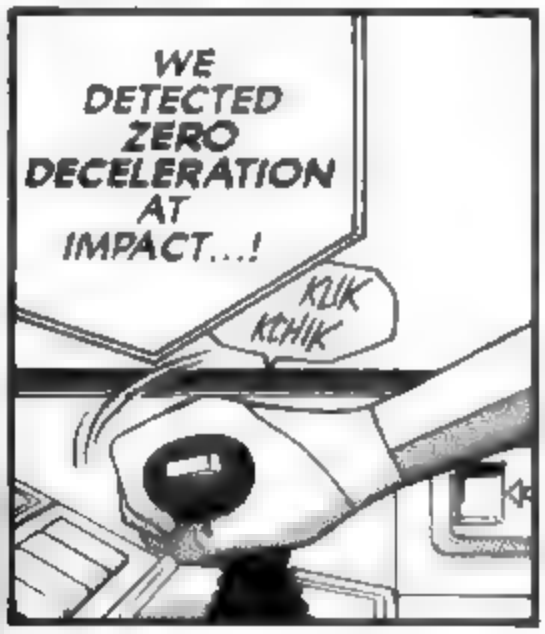
SHES'KA, HERE... PROCEED.

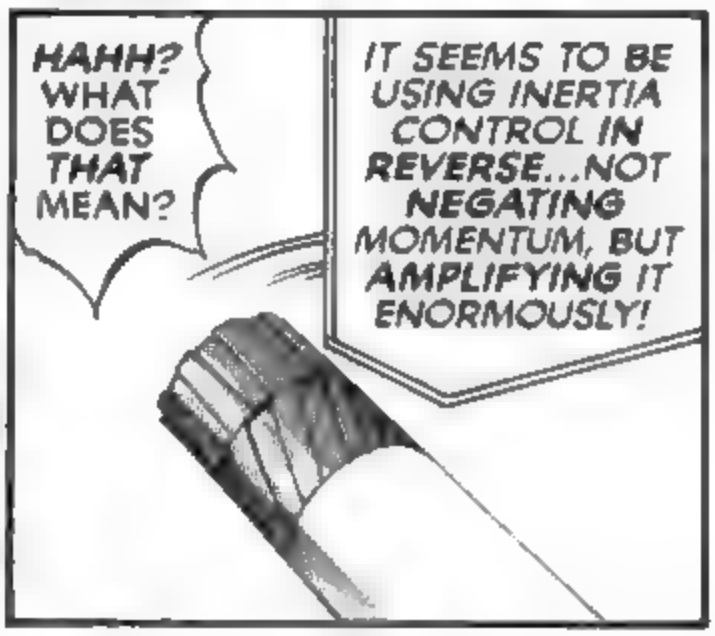
SIR... WE'VE IDENTIFIED THE BLACK-SUITED RIDER..

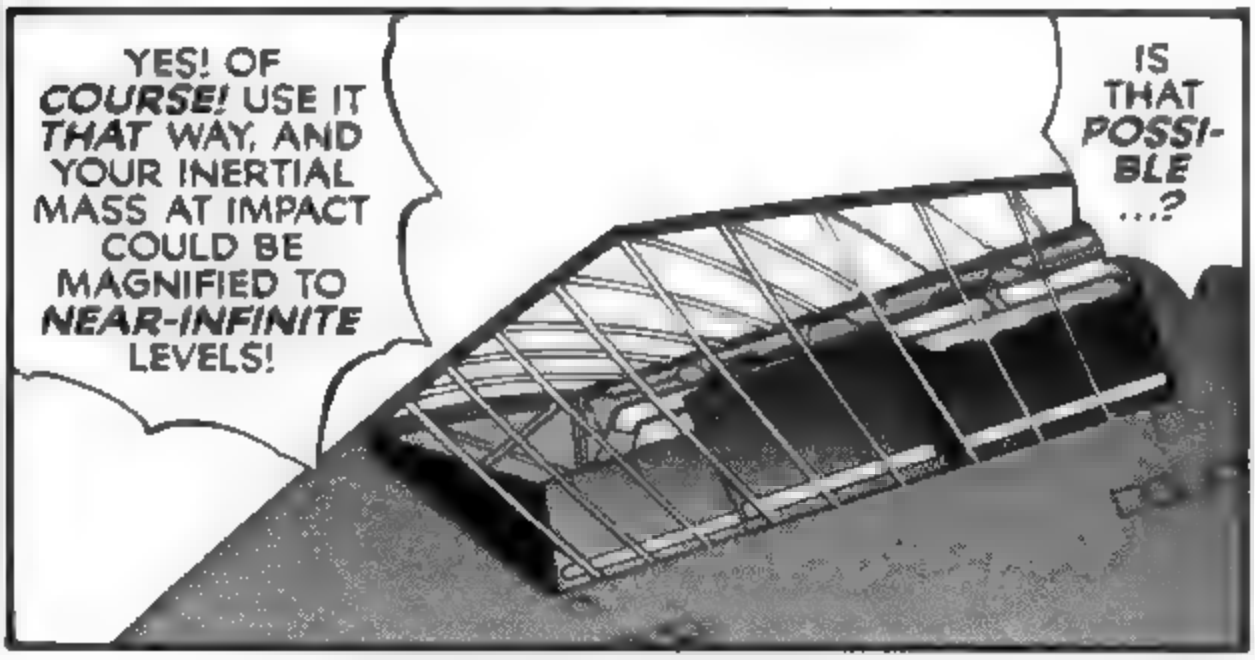
2.4


EXAXAO!

WE'VE LOST GENERATORS ONE, THREE, AND FOUR! KASA'AR'S PRIMARY POWER CABLE HAS BEEN SEVERED...NOW SWITCHING TO BACK-UP LINE!
GIVE ME AN ANALY-SIS OF THAT STRIKE! NOW!


WE DETECTED ZERO DECELERATION AT IMPACT...!
KLIK KCHIK


HAHH? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
IT SEEMS TO BE USING INERTIA CONTROL IN REVERSE...NOT NEGATING MOMENTUM, BUT AMPLIFYING IT ENORMOUSLY!


YES! OF COURSE! USE IT THAT WAY, AND YOUR INERTIAL MASS AT IMPACT COULD BE MAGNIFIED TO NEAR-INFINITE LEVELS!
IS THAT POSSI-BLE ...?

IT'S POSSIBLE IF YOU HAVE AN ***ANTI-MATTER GENERATOR*** ON HAND-- WITH INSTANT, ***MASSIVE*** POWER OUTPUT!

THIS MONSTER CAN PERFORM ***PINPOINT*** INERTIA CONTROL, ***ANYWHERE*** ON ITS BODY!

MAJOR AN'VIRU! DISENGAGE ***IMME-DIATELY!***

WE'LL ***RECOVER*** YOU AND RETREAT!

UNDER-STOOD, SIR... BUT...

...I'M SUPPOSED TO JUST ***RUN AWAY?*** WITHOUT SO MUCH AS EVEN ***SCRATCHING*** THE ENEMY?!

KXION

SKREEK

KLANGG

KLK

MASTER HOICHI! WE'RE TAKING ***SEVERE*** LASER ABLATION DAMAGE TO THE LEFT SHOULDER JOINT.. !

ISAKA! MY LEFT HAND MOUNTS A ***460mm CANNON,*** RIGHT? AND IT'S JAMMED INTO THAT SUCKER'S ***BODY,*** RIGHT?

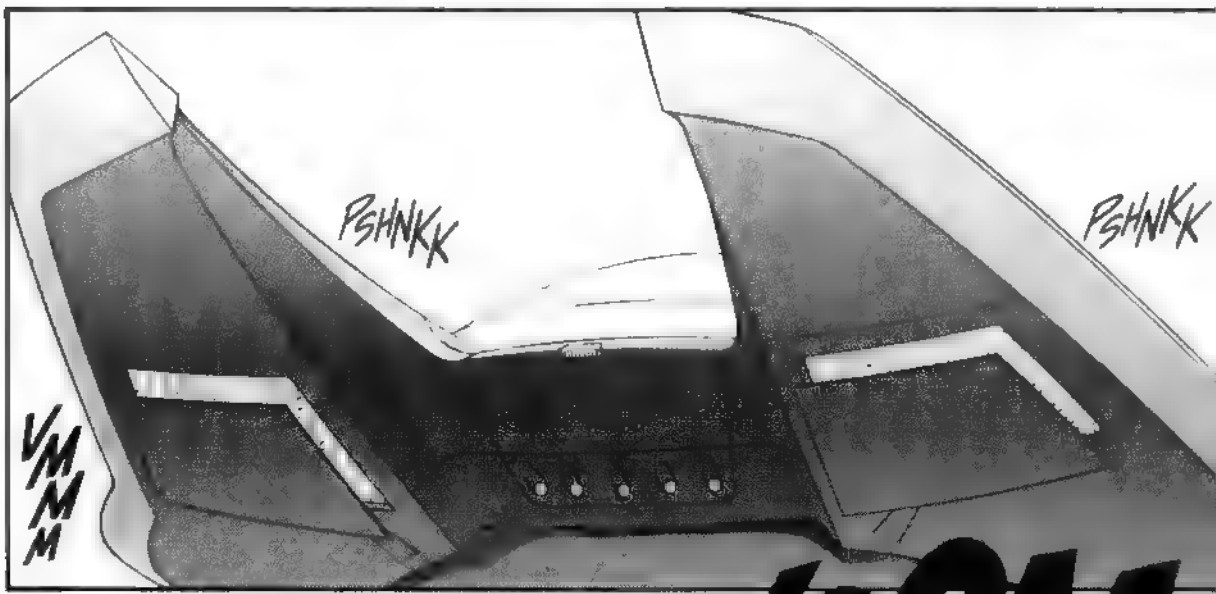
RIGHT.

WELL, WHY THE HELL DON'T I JUST ***TAKE THE SHOT?!***

KCHIK

KCHOK
FWOOMF
AAAAA!!
FZZZK
WH
KO

RECOVER *KASA'AR* NOW! *NOW*, DAMN IT!
DEPLOY THE *NEGATIVE-G* LIFTING FIELD!
GRAB THE *TERRAIN* AROUND IT! GRAB *EVERY-THING!*


PSHNKK
PSHNKK
VMMM

SHOOM

FIZZAK

WAIT, SIR! I'M *BURNING* HIM! GIVE ME *ONE* MORE MINUTE--

WE'RE TAKING YOU NOW, MAJOR!

JESUS! I CAN FEEL MY *ARM* DISLOCAT-ING--!

MASTER HOICHI! EXAXXION'S SHOULDER JOINT IS *OVERHEATING!* CONDITION *YELLOW!*

THE *FIN-GERS!*

GIMME THE *FINGERS* BACK, ISAKA!

FZZZZK

KRRCH

GSHANGG

SKRAKK

SHIIINGG

PSSHT

COLONEL! I CAN SEVER ITS ARM!
LET ME DOWN! PLEASE!
IT'S OVER! SHUT DOWN YOUR LASER!
VMMM
SHOOM
VORPP!
OH, NO YOU DON'T--!
LEFT ARM TEMPERATURE IS NOW CRITICAL ...!
KSHANGG
SKREEK
KLANK
MASTER HOICHI IS OPENING FIRE, SIR!
AH! THAT'S THE SPIRIT, LADDIE!
KCHIK!

BKBOM
BKBOM
BKBOM
BKBOM
BKBOM
BKBOM

SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK
VMMM VMMM
SHIELD CAPACITY IS *MAXING OUT!* WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH *POWER!* WE'RE LOSING *FIELD INTEGRITY,* SIR!
RMBB RMBB RMBB
SACRI-FICE IT.
RMBB
DIVERT ALL POWER FROM THE *LIFTING FIELD!*
RMBB
BUT, SIR... WHAT ABOUT *KASA'AR ...?*
LIFTING FIELD DEACTI-VATED!
W-*WAIT--!*
ISAKA! THE DAMN THING WON'T STOP *SHOOTING--!*
HMM... *OVERHEATING* HAS TRIGGERED *AMMUNITION COOKOFF.*
I'LL *CUT* THE FIRING CIRCUIT...
BKOOM BKOOM BKOOM

WHA-THOOM
FSHHH
VREEE
IT'S STOPPED FIRING, SIR!
THANK GOD! GET US OUT OF HERE, NOW!
CHICKEN-SHITS...! HEY, ISAKA! GIMME THE EXA-CANNON!
IT'S NOT DESIGNED TO ENGAGE HIGH-SPEED TARGETS, MASTER HOICHI. YOU'D ALMOST CERTAINLY MISS, I'M AFRAID.
FOOOSH

AW, DAMN IT--!
EJECTING SPENT CARTRIDGES TO SPEED COOLING PROCESS...
PSHNKK
WHOOMF
KANGG
KTANGG
EXAXION
XAXXION
KANGG
KANGG
SPANGG
WHOOSH
SKRUNCH
EXAXION

SIR! IT'S MASTER HOICHI ...!
HMM? WHAT NOW?
THEY'VE IDENTI-FIED HIM, SIR!
IT'S ALL OVER THE TV NEWS... LOOK!
PUT IT UP ON THE BIG SCREEN, MY LOVELY.
THIS IS HOWA HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN HOICHI KANO, AGE SIXTEEN.
AUTHORITIES HAVE NOW CONFIRMED, FROM EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY, THAT KANO IS THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK-SUITED FIGURE...
.. WHO CUT A HORRIFIC SWATH OF DESTRUC-TION ACROSS JAPAN YESTERDAY.
RIOFALDIAN POLICE HAVE ISSUED AN ALL-POINTS BULLETIN FOR THIS DANGEROUS TERROR-IST.
THE FOLLOWING GRAPHIC FOOTAGE WAS RECORDED BY AN EYEWITNESS TO ONE OF KANO'S SHOCKING CRIMES...

COFFEE & BREAD
COFFEE & BREAD
OH, MY... THAT'S VERY EFFECTIVE PROPA-GANDA...!
THE WOMAN AND HER SON WERE RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL, BUT THEY WERE BOTH PRONOUNCED DEAD ON ARRIVAL... ALONG WITH HER UNBORN CHILD.
HUH. THEY'RE GOOD ...!
CRANKING OUT THAT HYSTER-ICAL SWILL WITHIN ONLY A FEW HOURS? BRAVO!
AND WITH GREAT EMOTIONAL TOUCHES... LOVE THAT BIT ABOUT THE UNBORN CHILD!
SO... A LIE FOR A LIE, THEN, SIR ...?
YEP. YOU KNOW WHICH ONE TO USE.
FLOOD THE TV CHAN-NELS WITH IT.
YES, SIR! ♥ SHOULD I PUT IT ON THE NET, TOO, SIR?
YEP.
OH! YOU'RE GOING TO USE THAT THINGY I MADE LAST YEAR...?
THAT'S RIGHT... LET'S SEE...

AH... HERE IT IS!
-BEEEP-
THAT'S THE ONE!
JUST INSERT THEIR "BABY-KILLING HOICHI" IMAGE RIGHT IN THERE, ON THIS MONITOR'S SCREEN...
...SO IT'LL SEEM AS OBVIOUS AS POSSIBLE THAT THEY'RE DOCTORING IMAGES...! YOU CAN HANDLE THIS YOURSELF, CAN'T YOU, VIDEO-MEISTER NORIKO ...?
YOU WON'T HELP...? BUT...
OH, COME ON, SILLY. IT'S EASY. JUST USE THE TOOLBOX...
DO IT FOR ME, BABE
OH!
AWW...! WHY DOES NORIKO GET SPECIAL ATTENTION ...?
SHEESH! YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT...!
I'LL SEND THE FILE UP FROM THE LAB IN FIFTEEN MINUTES, SIR!
GOOD LUCK HACKING INTO THE TV NETWORKS, GIRLS...!
MASTER HOSUKE IS JUST SO AMAZINGLY PRESCIENT ...!
ISN'T HE, THOUGH? NOT ONLY DID HE PREDICT AN INFORMATION WAR, HE PREPARED ALL THE RIGHT IMAGES BEFOREHAND!
AND NOW WE GET TO FIGHT EVIL ALIENS WITH OUR BRILLIANT MASTER IN A TOP-SECRET HIDDEN BASE!
OH, WHAT FUN...! ♪ I AM SO VERY TURNED ON...! ♪

CODE THREE *ALERT,* HUH...? HRMM... ..... *REIKO...?*
AW, *DANG* IT ALL . !

HAVE YOU PULLED UP ALL THE *KANO* FAMILY DATA?
UM. . WE'RE STILL *PROCESS-ING,* MA'AM...!
WELL, *SPEED IT UP!* I WANT THOSE FILES READY BY THE TIME I'M *THROUGH,* HERE .

HIGHWAY TEMPORARILY CLOSED
PLEASE EXIT TO THE RIGHT
HIGHWAY TEMPORARILY CLOSED
PLEASE EXIT TO THE RIGHT
HELLO? HELLO? WHAT, STILL NO NEWS...?
YES, WE'RE STAYING HERE! WHAT IF WE GET OFF THE HIGHWAY, AND THEN THE GATES OPEN? WE'D BE SCOOPED...!
YEAH, BUT AT LEAST WE'D BE...WHAT? THEY'RE BLOCKING STREET TRAFFIC, TOO?
SBC
55
WHAT ABOUT OUR CHOPPER? NO GOOD? WHY NOT?
HEY! LISTEN TO THIS! THEY JUST AUTHORIZED THE ARMY TO OPEN FIRE IN THE NO-ENTRY ZONE!
HELLO? YES ...?
WHAAAT?
A GIANT ROBOT? HEADED HERE--?
TVM

KSHHH
KREEK
KREEK
!?
HUH ...?
H- HEY...! ISN'T THAT...
WOW... IT'S MOVING FAST... REALLY FAST...!
KSHANGG
KSHANGG
KSHANGG

KSHANGG
SKROOM
GAKK --!
OH, SHIT... IT'S SMASHING THE HIGHW--
.TV

FWOOSH

KKOOM

HOTEL CHÂTEAU

HOICHI, LADDIE! YOU'RE PEELING UP THE *HIGHWAY,* AND SMASHING THE HELL OUT OF ALL THE POOR BASTARDS IN THOSE *CARS...!*

YOU HAVE TO *TAKE MORE CARE,* MY BOY!

WHAT *IS* THIS, GRANDPA? ALL OF A SUDDEN, YOU'RE GETTING *TENDER-HEARTED?!*

WE'RE CONDUCT-ING AN INFORMA-TION WAR HERE, HOICHI!!

EXAXXION

DON'T COMMIT ANY ATROCITIES THAT WE CAN'T COVER UP, UNDER-STAND?

ALL *RIGHT,* AL-READY!

DAMN!

SHNKK

TO BE CONTINUED...!

2.5
PART ONE
STAGE 1
CAMION

KHROOOOOM
BOMF

DAMN IT--!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
HOW COULD SOME WRETCHED MONKEY BEAT ME...?
DAMN IT!

MAJOR AN'VIRU TO HQ... COME IN, HQ... CAN YOU READ ME...?
CAN'T GET A SIGNAL THROUGH ALL THIS EM INTERFERENCE, WITH THAT LITTLE TRANSMITTER... CAN YOU?
JAPA-NESE TROOPS ...?
EXCELLENT! TAKE ME TO THE CLOSEST RIOFALDIAN MILITARY BASE, NOW!
YOU'LL GET A PROMO-TION, I GUARAN--
KCHAK
SORRY. WE'RE AN INDEPENDENT UNIT NOW, MA'AM. OUTSIDE THE COMMAND-AND-CONTROL CHAIN OF THE CURRENT SELF-DEFENSE FORCES ADMINISTRA-TION
SO DROP THE HELMET, AND GET FACE-DOWN ON THE GROUND NOW!

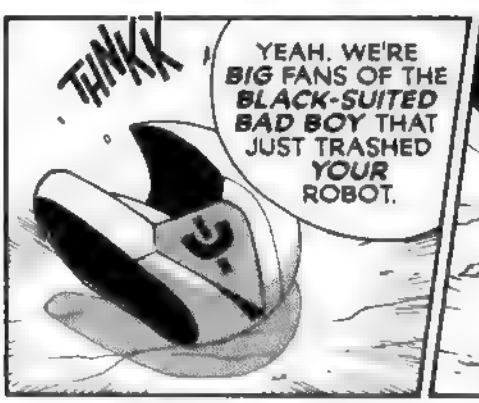
WHA ...?

IDIOTS! EVEN IF YOU'RE STUPID ENOUGH TO *REBEL*... WHAT CAN A *SINGLE UNIT* POSSIBLY HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?

WELL, YOU MIGHT JUST SAY THAT WE'RE *FANS,* MA'AM

"FANS" ...?

WHOO
AAH!


THNKK
YEAH. WE'RE *BIG* FANS OF THE *BLACK-SUITED BAD BOY* THAT JUST TRASHED *YOUR* ROBOT.

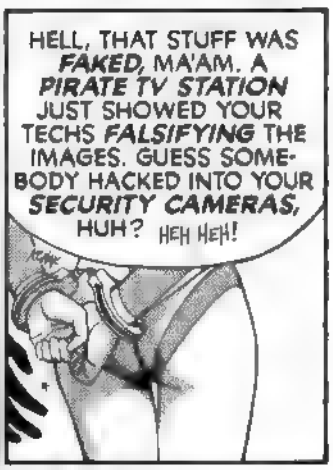
FDD
HGKK
S-STOP THIS, YOU... YOU *BARBAR-IANS!*

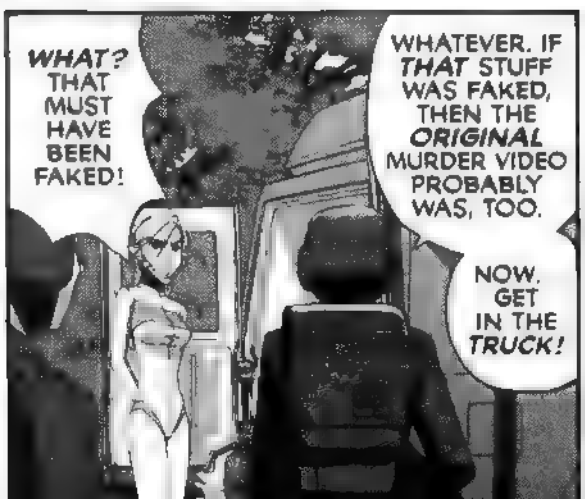
WE CONTROL MORE MILITARY ASSETS THAN THE COMBINED ARMED FORCES OF YOUR ENTIRE PLANET!
ONE ROBOT CAN'T TURN THE TIDE OF A WHOLE WAR, NO MATTER HOW STRONG IT IS!

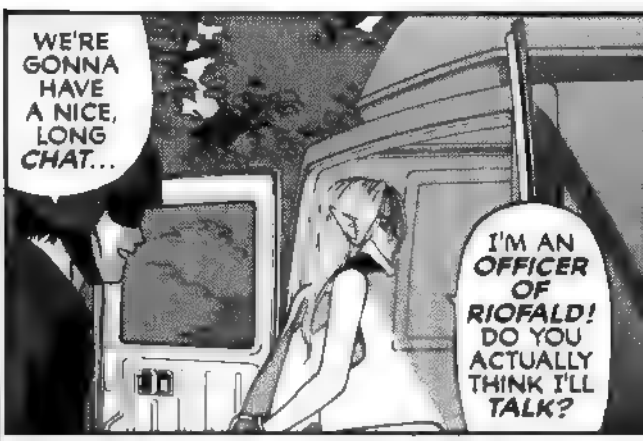
WE'RE THINKIN' YOU MIGHT BE WRONG ABOUT THAT
OTHERWISE, WHY ARE YOU 'FALDIES THROWING EVERY LAST BIT OF FIREPOWER YOU'VE GOT AT IT?
WE RECORDED YOUR LITTLE BATTLE. JUST WAIT UNTIL THIS FOOTAGE HITS THE NET...!

THEY BUILT THIS GEAR FOR MONITORING NUCLEAR TESTS... SURE CAME IN HANDY, TODAY
WE GOT EVERYTHING ON VIDEO. ALL AROUND THE WORLD, MORALE'S GONNA SOAR!

BET YOU'RE GONNA SEE A HUGE JUMP IN GUERRILLA ACTIONS WORLD-WIDE...
BUT... BUT THE PILOT'S A MASS MURDERER! DIDN'T YOU SEE THE NEWS FOOT-AGE?!

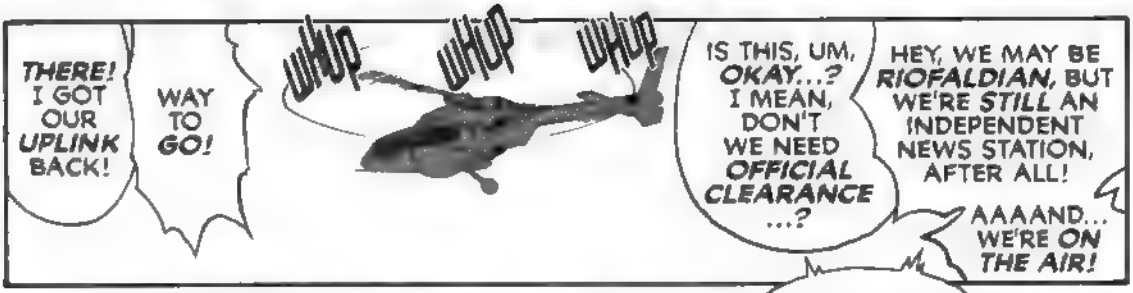

HELL, THAT STUFF WAS FAKED, MA'AM. A PIRATE TV STATION JUST SHOWED YOUR TECHS FALSIFYING THE IMAGES. GUESS SOMEBODY HACKED INTO YOUR SECURITY CAMERAS, HUH? HEH HEH!


WHAT? THAT MUST HAVE BEEN FAKED!
WHATEVER. IF THAT STUFF WAS FAKED, THEN THE ORIGINAL MURDER VIDEO PROBABLY WAS, TOO.
NOW, GET IN THE TRUCK!


WE'RE GONNA HAVE A NICE, LONG CHAT...
I'M AN OFFICER OF RIOFALD! DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK I'LL TALK?

OH, WE RECKON YOU *WILL*, MA'AM... LET'S JUST SAY *HQ'S* GOT ALL *KINDS* OF FUN *INTERROGATION DRUGS* ON HAND...!
THAP
YOU RE GONNA *LOVE* IT.
SLAMM
VRRRMMMBB
FWOOSH

KSHOOM
KSHOOM
KSHOOM
SPLSH


THERE! I GOT OUR UPLINK BACK!
WAY TO GO!
WHUP WHUP WHUP
IS THIS, UM, OKAY...? I MEAN, DON'T WE NEED OFFICIAL CLEARANCE ...?
HEY, WE MAY BE RIOFALDIAN, BUT WE'RE STILL AN INDEPENDENT NEWS STATION, AFTER ALL!
AAAAND... WE'RE ON THE AIR!

LOOK AT THIS, VIEWERS! THE MYSTERY ROBOT IS NOW HEADING EAST ALONG THE COAST! ON ITS SIDE, A GIANT LOGO READING... "EXAXXION" ...!
JA2307
JA2307
06
EVEN STRIDING THROUGH DEEP WATER, IT'S STILL TRAVELING AT NEARLY 100 MILES PER HOUR!

IS A BOY REALLY CONTROLLING THIS ROBOT, JUST LIKE IN AN ANIME ...?
RUMOR HAS IT THAT ITS PILOT IS NONE OTHER THAN THAT NOW-INFAMOUS BLACK-SUITED TEENAGER, HOICHI KANO!
IN ANY EVENT, THIS REAL-LIFE GIANT ROBOT IS ENORMOUS!
IT'S KICKING UP MASSIVE WAVES EASILY THIRTY FEET HIGH!
NO, MAKE THAT FIFTY FEET HIGH!
RMBB RMBB RMBB RMBB RMBB
LIKE A SERIES OF TSUNAMIS...
...ITS WAKE IS POURING OVER THE SEAWALL, FLOODING ENTIRE COASTAL TOWNS AT ONCE!

ONE HAS TO WONDER-- IS THIS ROBOT TRULY A FRIEND TO HUMANITY?
AFTER ALL, THE PILOT IS THE SAME KILLER WHO'S BEEN CAUGHT ON VIDEO SLAUGHTERING A HELPLESS PREGNANT WOMAN AND HER CHILDREN!
DOES HE PERHAPS REPRESENT SOME THIRD POWER... NEITHER RIOFALDIAN NOR TERRAN?
WHAT --?
KSHOOM KSHOOM KSHOOM
THEY GOT AKANE AND MOM TOO? ARE YOU SERIOUS?
WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? WHERE ARE THEY? IS MOM OKAY?
CALM DOWN, LADDIE. WE'RE CHECKING INTO IT.
FOUND THEM, SIR. NOW DOWN-LOADING THE DATA TO ISAKA.
GRAND, MY DEAR.
AND HOW'S REIKO FARING ...?

HER BIO-METRICS ARE READING OPTIMALLY, SIR...
...BUT SHE'S HOOKED UP TO AN INTERRO-GATION DEVICE RIGHT NOW!
WELL, KEEP ON MONITOR-ING, MY PET.
WE'VE LOWERED AND CLOSED OFF THE LIFT PLATFORM, MASTER HOSUKE. THE ENEMY NEVER MANAGED TO BREACH OUR SECURITY...THOUGH THEY LEFT A FAIR NUMBER OF BODIES BEHIND...
HELL, JUST TOSS 'EM OUT WITH THE TRASH.
GRANDPA! CAN'T YOU HELP MOM AND AKANE FROM HERE? WHAT IF I CAN'T GET TO THEM IN TIME...?
OH, I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, MY BOY!
WHAT IS THIS --?!
THIS UNIT CAN'T SCAN HER, EITHER...EVEN WITH ITS FIELDS BOOSTED TO MAXIMUM POWER...!
GET TECHNICAL UP HERE TO RUN DIAGNOSTIC CHECKS ON ALL THE MACHINES, IMMEDIATELY! AND PUT HER BACK IN HER CELL WHILE WE PREP FOR CHEMICAL INTERROGATION!
PSHNKK
R. KANO
KCHNK

NO TALKING! WE'LL BRING YOU FOOD LATER.
DOES CAPTAIN ZAEIR'R HAVE ANY IDEA WHY THE INTERROGATION DEVICES DIDN'T WORK? SOME KIND OF SHIELDING IMPLANT, PERHAPS...?
NO SIGNS OF ANY, SIR. THE SCANS WERE CLEAN.
WELL, REMEMBER THAT HER SON CLEARLY HAD ACCESS TO IMPRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY... SO, BE VIGILANT!
Y-YES, SIR!

THE GIANT ROBOT HAS MOVED FARTHER OFFSHORE, BUT IS STILL HEADING STRAIGHT FOR TOKYO.
WILL IT BLAST THE CAPITAL INTO A SEA OF FIRE?
HMPH ...!
BREEP
EXPERIENCING TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES
BREEP
SIGNAL INACCESSIBLE
BREEP
DARN... I CAN ONLY GET THEIR MEDIA CHANNELS.
AND THERE'S NOT MUCH THERE EITHER..
DIP
DIFF.
.....
.....
FWHIP

YOUR REPORTER TONIGHT IS *AKANE HINO!*
I'M BROAD-CASTING FROM INSIDE A *RIOFALDIAN DETENTION CENTER.*
THIS SMALL CELL IS *SPARTAN,* FEATURING LITTLE MORE THAN A TV SCREEN AND MONITOR CAMERA...
...A TOILET... A SINK...
...AND A BUNK.
HERE, WE SEE A SMALL SHUTTER FOR ADMITTING *FOOD TRAYS,* SET IN THE STURDY METAL OF THE DOOR.
THIS IS MORE AKIN TO A PRISON'S *SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL* THAN SO-CALLED *"DETENTION QUARTERS,"* AS THE RIOFALDIANS LABEL IT.
AS WE SEE, THE RIOFALDIANS CAN SEIZE EVEN A *HARMLESS SCHOOL-GIRL* SUCH AS MYSELF...
...AND *INCARCER-ATE* HER WITHOUT EVER FILING CHARGES!
HOW MANY MORE *INNOCENT CITIZENS* WILL THEY IMPRISON HERE, LIKE THE *SECRET POLICE* OF OLD?
CLEARLY, RIOFALD'S MILITARY MIGHT IS *FORMIDABLE* INDEED...
...SO, SHOULD HUMANITY GIVE IN TO *DESPAIR?*
NO!

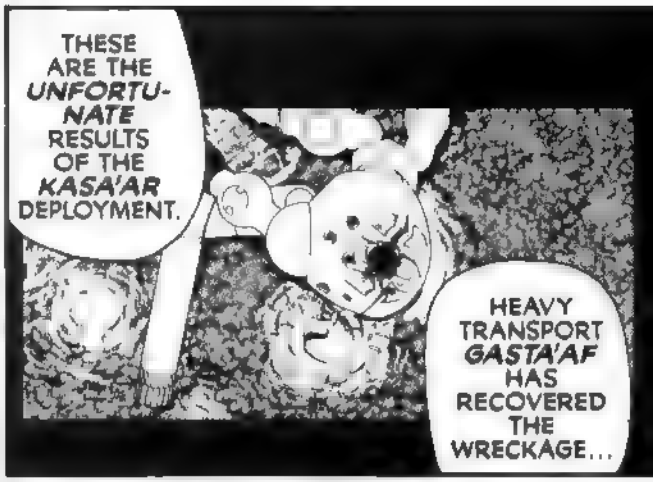
FOR... THERE IS HOPE!
THAT'S RIGHT! HIM!
CRUSHING TERMINAL DRONES! BLOWING AWAY RIOFALDIAN ROBO-COPS!
YES, THAT MYSTERIOUS BLACK-SUITED SUPER-HERO! HE'S OUR GREATEST HOPE, OUR ONLY...
....
....
GRAB A CLUE, AKANE
HFF...
SHWIPP
KLIK
:sniff-

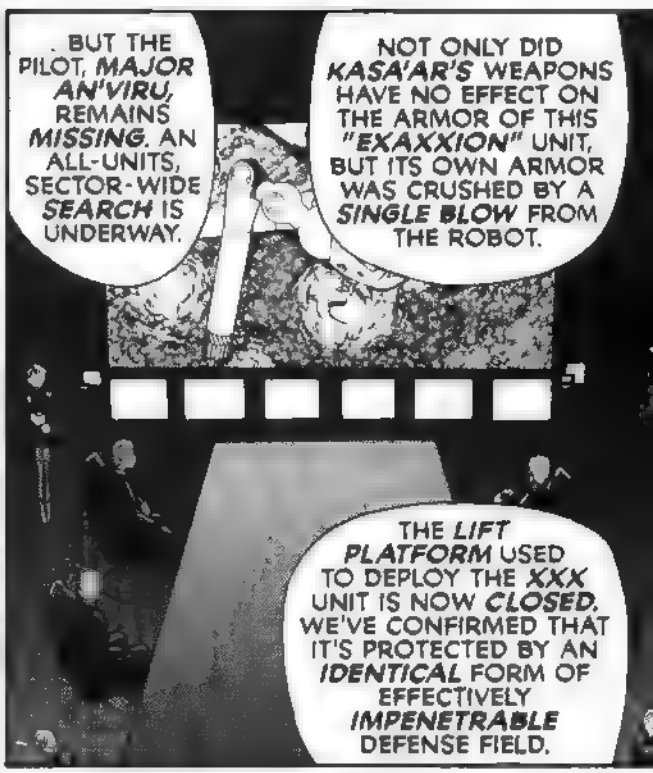
VWIPP
PLSH
EEK?!
AAA?!
VWIPP

AKANE... WHISPER, PLEASE!
IT'S ME, DEAR.
A-AUNTIE REIKO ...?
I'M SORRY, DEAR...I DIDN'T MEAN TO SURPRISE YOU THAT MUCH!

ANYWAY, THEY ARRESTED ME, TOO. WE'RE ON THE SAME FLOOR...I'M RUNNING THIS LINE THROUGH THEIR PLUMBING SYSTEM.
ARREST-ED...? BUT WHY ...?
THEY ARRESTED ME BECAUSE I TRIED TO STOP THEM FROM TAKING YOU, DEAR.
BUT DON'T WORRY...I MANAGED TO GRAB SOME, oh, TOOLS BEFORE THEY CAPTURED ME. AND I'VE CALLED FOR HELP FROM SOMEONE WE CAN TRUST!

SO, TAKE HEART, AKANE DEAR.
I'LL COME AND RESCUE YOU... I PROMISE.
THANK YOU, AUNTIE REIKO. TH...THANK YOU SO MUCH!
B-BUT... WHO'S THIS "SOMEONE WE CAN TRUST" ...?
A GREAT MAN, DEAR.. A MAN WHO WILL SOON RULE US ALL...
HUH ...?


THESE ARE THE *UNFORTUNATE* RESULTS OF THE *KASA'AR* DEPLOYMENT.
HEAVY TRANSPORT *GASTA'AF* HAS RECOVERED THE WRECKAGE...


. BUT THE PILOT, *MAJOR AN'VIRU,* REMAINS *MISSING.* AN ALL-UNITS, SECTOR-WIDE *SEARCH* IS UNDERWAY.
NOT ONLY DID *KASA'AR'S* WEAPONS HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE ARMOR OF THIS *"EXAXXION"* UNIT, BUT ITS OWN ARMOR WAS CRUSHED BY A *SINGLE BLOW* FROM THE ROBOT.
THE *LIFT PLATFORM* USED TO DEPLOY THE *XXX* UNIT IS NOW *CLOSED.* WE'VE CONFIRMED THAT IT'S PROTECTED BY AN *IDENTICAL* FORM OF EFFECTIVELY *IMPENETRABLE* DEFENSE FIELD.

I'VE SEEN THE *FIGURES,* GENTLEMEN. THE ESTIMATED *ENERGY OUTPUT* OF THIS MACHINE *WELL* EXCEEDS THAT OF A *DREADNAUGHT-CLASS* WARSHIP.
I HAD NO IDEA THAT THOSE LEGENDARY *XXX UNITS* WERE SO *POWERFUL...*

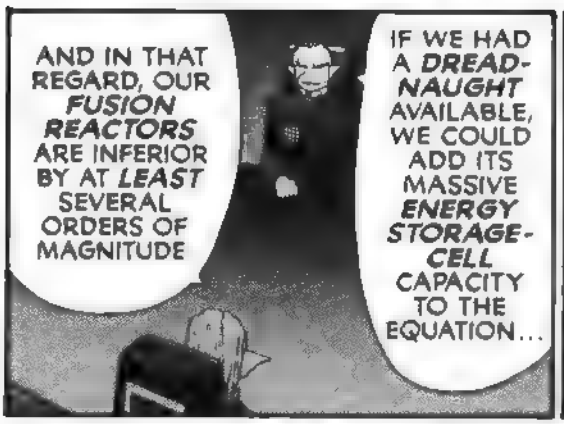
CERTAINLY, WE *COULD* STAGE A SUCCESSFUL *COUP D'ETAT* ON THE *HOMEWORLD* WITH THIS UNIT...BUT THAT'S ASSUMING THAT ITS STORAGE TANKS AREN'T RUNNING LOW ON *ANTIMATTER,* OF COURSE.
OUR HISTORICAL RESEARCH FINDS *NO EVIDENCE* OF THE UNIT EVER BEING ACTIVATED IN THE PAST.
SO, WE CAN ASSUME THAT THE *BULK* OF ITS ANTIMATTER SUPPLY REMAINS *INTACT.*
BUT IT'S A *MONSTER,* GENTLEMEN. *SOROSARM, KASA'AR,* AND ALL OUR *OTHER* ATTACKS DIDN'T SO MUCH AS *SCRATCH* IT. SO... PRECISELY HOW DO WE *CAPTURE* THIS BEAST...?

WE *NEGOTI-ATE.*
WHAT'S THAT, *SHES'KA?* YOU THINK THE PILOT WOULD RESPOND IF WE OFFERED HIM, SAY, A *CONSUL-SHIP?*
ACTUALLY, WE HAVE A MOST EFFECTIVE *HOSTAGE* ON HAND

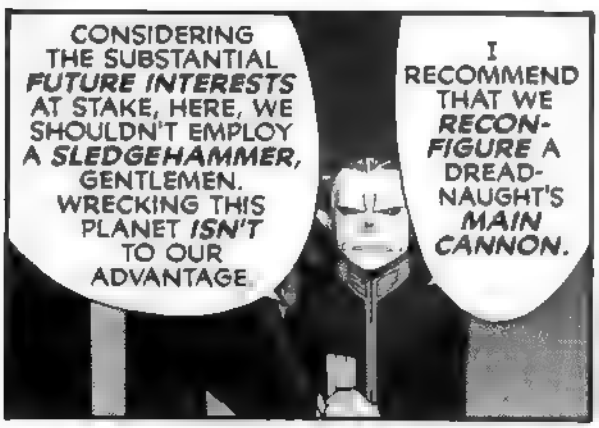
OR, RATHER, MORE *SIGNIFI-CANTLY...*
...SOMEONE WHO CAN GET *CLOSE* TO HIM!

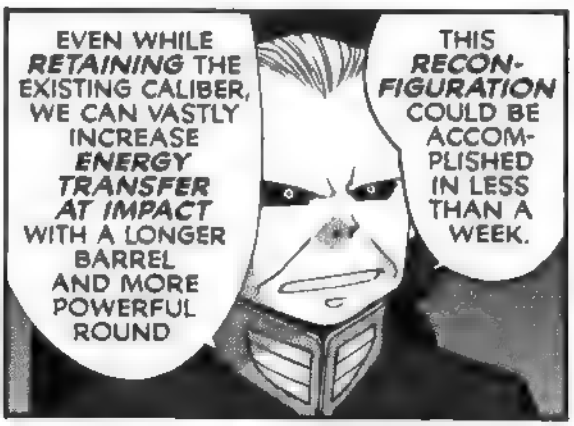
2.5
PART TWO
STAGE 2
PROJECT EXAXXION
KAWO FACTORY
460 MM Cal

A HOSTAGE? WHO WOULD ABANDON SUCH AN AMAZING WEAPON SYSTEM FOR THE SAKE OF A MERE HOSTAGE...?
ALL WE NEED IS TO BUY SOME TIME, GENTLEMEN.
IF ENERGY WEAPONS WON'T WORK, THAT MEANS INERTIAL CONTROL WARFARE, USING MASS-BASED WEAPONS
THE ISSUE AT HAND, HERE, IS THE PEAK ENERGY OUTPUT CURVE.


AND IN THAT REGARD, OUR FUSION REACTORS ARE INFERIOR BY AT LEAST SEVERAL ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE
IF WE HAD A DREAD-NAUGHT AVAILABLE, WE COULD ADD ITS MASSIVE ENERGY STORAGE-CELL CAPACITY TO THE EQUATION...

COME TO THINK OF IT, DREADNAUGHT-LEVEL MASS WEAPONS ARE THE SAME CALIBER AS SOROSARM'S CANNON, AREN'T THEY? HMM...
IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, WE COULD USE TARGETED ASTEROID IMPACTS...


CONSIDERING THE SUBSTANTIAL FUTURE INTERESTS AT STAKE, HERE, WE SHOULDN'T EMPLOY A SLEDGEHAMMER, GENTLEMEN. WRECKING THIS PLANET ISN'T TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
I RECOMMEND THAT WE RECON-FIGURE A DREAD-NAUGHT'S MAIN CANNON.


EVEN WHILE RETAINING THE EXISTING CALIBER, WE CAN VASTLY INCREASE ENERGY TRANSFER AT IMPACT WITH A LONGER BARREL AND MORE POWERFUL ROUND
THIS RECON-FIGURATION COULD BE ACCOM-PLISHED IN LESS THAN A WEEK.

SPLENDID. I'LL AUTHORIZE THAT IMMEDI-ATELY...
...BUT AS A FALL-BACK OPTION.

A FALL-BACK OPTION ...?
WHAT, THEN, IS YOUR PRIMARY OPTION?

IDEALLY, WE WANT THAT ROBOT'S ***XXX*** UNIT ***INTACT,*** GENTLEMAN. THIS WOULD NECESSITATE ***PINPOINT*** ACCURACY..

...MEANING ***CLOSE-IN COMBAT,*** NO DOUBT. AND NONE OF OUR ***CURRENTLY AVAILABLE*** ASSETS ARE UP TO THE TASK.

I PROPOSE THAT WE DEPLOY AN ***IDENTICAL*** UNIT AGAINST IT.

AND I'VE ALREADY LAUNCHED A PROGRAM TO ***ACQUIRE*** US JUST SUCH AN ASSET.

ANOTHER ONE OF THESE LEGENDARY ANTI-MATTER UNITS ...?

I DON'T ***BELIEVE*** IT...! FROM ***WHERE*** ...?

FROM ***HERE,*** GENTLE-MEN.

BWEEE

VMMMM
AH... OF COURSE.
THE HYPER-SPACE GATE...
A DETACHMENT UNDER COLONEL HULAN'KI IS EN ROUTE TO THE GATE AS WE SPEAK. HE'S UTTERLY LOYAL TO OUR CAUSE, GENTLEMEN.
BUT...DO WE DARE...? THAT GATE IS UNDER THE DIRECT JURISDICTION OF THE HOME-WORLD...!

AND EVEN IF WE SUCCESSFULLY ***SEIZE*** IT, THERE REMAINS THE QUESTION OF OUR INTERFERENCE WITH THE GATE'S ***ANTIMATTER RESOURCES.***

TRUE. SHOULD THE WORMHOLE ***COLLAPSE,*** THE FUSION REACTORS WHICH HOLD IT OPEN COULD NOT REOPEN IT. HOWEVER, THE GATE REACTORS AND THEIR BACKUPS HAVE A ***MTBF*** OF OVER FIVE HUNDRED YEARS. I'M NOT TOO CONCERNED.

STILL, GENERAL SHES'KA...EVEN IF WE WERE TO COLLECT THE ANTIMATTER FROM ***ALL*** THE OTHER GATES IN ***EVERY*** STAR SYSTEM, THE TOTAL AMOUNT WOULD ***STILL*** BE INADEQUATE

Mean Time Between Failures

JUDGING FROM THAT ROBOT'S ***XXX*** RESPONSE, ITS ANTIMATTER MASS ADVANTAGE IS SIMPLY ***INSURMOUNT-ABLE.***

THE BATTLE WILL BE DECIDED ONE WAY OR ANOTHER IN ***MINUTES,*** GENTLEMEN TOTAL ANTIMATTER SUPPLY ***ISN'T*** THE ISSUE

I HAVE A ***VERY*** PARTICULAR PLAN IN MIND. .AND ***EVERY*** EXPECTATION OF VICTORY.

GENERAL SHES'KA... THE ***BACK-GROUND MATERIAL*** IS READY

GOOD. PUT IT UP

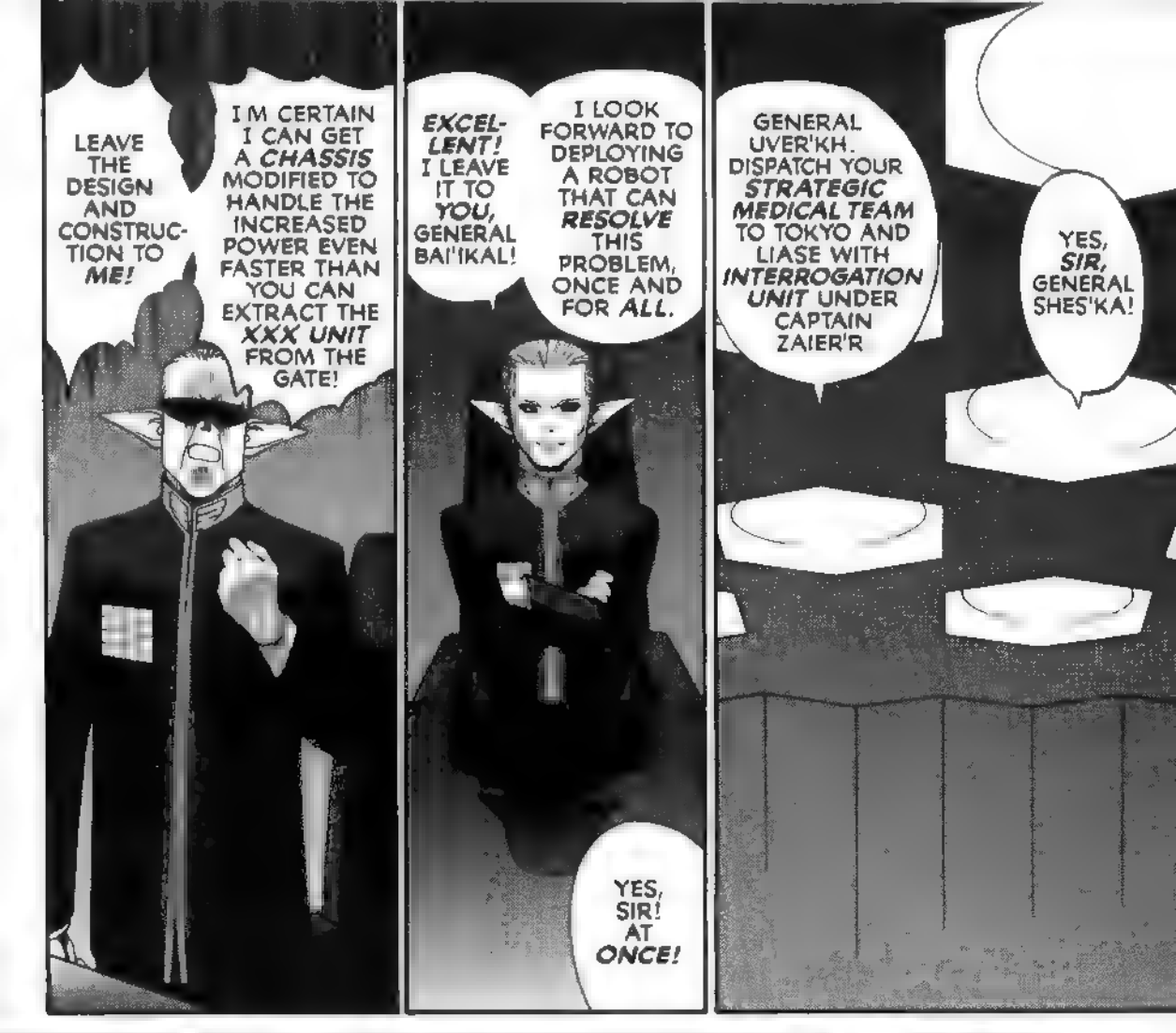
SO...THIS ***"EXAKXION"*** IS OUR ***OWN*** PLANETARY SUPPRESSION WEAPON, DEPLOYED ***1800 YEARS*** AGO, EH? INTERESTING!

MORE THAN 2000 ***TERRAN*** YEARS, YES?

WASN'T THAT DURING THE CLOSING DAYS OF OUR ***FIRST*** PERIOD OF PLANETARY COLONIZATION?

INDEED... WHEN RIOFALD WAS AT ITS MILITARY AND TECHNO-LOGICAL ***PEAK.***

BUT WHY WOULD SUCH A POLITICALLY AND STRATEGICALLY SIGNIFICANT WEAPON BE DEPLOYED *HERE?*
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT THE RIOFALD OF 1800 YEARS AGO WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED *THIS* PIT TO BE A PRIME COLONY PLANET. THERE WERE *MANY* MORE PROMISING WORLDS THAN THIS...
CAPTAIN RYA'AM ...?
I'M AFRAID WE'VE UNCOVERED *NO* DATA THAT EXPLAINS THIS, SIR.
THE TIMEFRAME INVOLVED WAS JUST BEFORE THE *GREAT DISRUPTION*...SO ACCURATE RECORDS ARE *NONEXISTENT* BEYOND THIS POINT
THE *"GREAT DISRUPTION"...?* OH, YOU MEAN WHEN THE *ANTIMATTER ASTEROID* THAT FUELED THE EMPIRE ACCIDENTALLY *COLLIDED* WITH THE GENERATING PLANET?
YES, THE AWFUL *"DAY OF DARKNESS"...*
TENS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES, AND ALMOST *ALL* OF RIOFALD'S ELECTRONIC DATA, ANNIHILATED IN AN INSTANT BY A MONSTROUS *GAMMA-RAY PULSE.*
AND ALMOST THE *ENTIRE* ANTIMATTER ASTEROID'S MASS WAS LOST, CONVERTED TO *GAMMA-RAY FLUX* IN THE DISASTER.
HMM...IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THIS ROBOT WAS *IN TRANSIT* BY STARSHIP AT THE TIME OF THE EVENT.
THE PULSE COULD HAVE WIPED OUT THE SHIP'S *CREW* AND SCRAMBLED THE *NAV-SYSTEM*...THEN, BOTH THE ROBOT AND ALL RECORDS OF IT ARE LOST.
IN ANY CASE, IT'S AN OUTDATED *RELIC.*
THINK--WITH THE *SAME* ENERGY SOURCE, A *NEWER* ROBOT WOULD BE *FAR* MORE POWERFUL!
BAM
YES! LET'S BUILD IT!


LEAVE THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUC-TION TO *ME!*
I'M CERTAIN I CAN GET A *CHASSIS* MODIFIED TO HANDLE THE INCREASED POWER EVEN FASTER THAN YOU CAN EXTRACT THE *XXX UNIT* FROM THE GATE!
EXCEL-LENT! I LEAVE IT TO *YOU,* GENERAL BAI'IKAL!
I LOOK FORWARD TO DEPLOYING A ROBOT THAT CAN *RESOLVE* THIS PROBLEM, ONCE AND FOR *ALL.*
YES, SIR! AT *ONCE!*
GENERAL UVER'KH. DISPATCH YOUR *STRATEGIC MEDICAL TEAM* TO TOKYO AND LIASE WITH *INTERROGATION UNIT* UNDER CAPTAIN ZAIER'R
YES, *SIR,* GENERAL SHES'KA!

HUH? SO YOU *DIDN'T* BUILD THIS SUCKER *YOURSELF,* GRANDPA ?
WHUP WHUP WHUP
BUT... I *THOUGHT...*
WHUP
KSHOOMKSHOOM
KSHOOM

AS I TOLD YOU, MY BOY... I FOUND IT, ANALYZED IT, AND REVERSE-ENGINEERED ITS TECHNOLOGY.
SO, THEN...ALL THOSE PATENTS YOU GOT... THEY WERE...
YEP. LEARNED A HELL OF A LOT FROM BUGGERING AROUND WITH THIS THING, YOU SEE.
FWAPP
JEEZ... SO THERE'S ONLY ONE OF THESE ROBOTS, THEN?
LET ME EXPLAIN... WAIT, IT'S EASIER WITH VISUALS.
EXAXXION
BLINK
GAKK ...?
H-HEY! I CAN'T SEE WITH THESE THINGS ON...!
DON'T WORRY, LADDIE... ISAKA CAN GUIDE EXAXXION IN THE MEAN-TIME.
VREEEE
HUH ...?
HOICHI, MY BOY... CAN YOU SEE ME?
GRAND-PA...? WHERE THE HELL ARE WE...?
NOWHERE, LADDIE. THIS IS JUST A COMPUTER-GENERATED VR SIMULATION I COOKED UP TO HELP ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.

I'M RUNNING MY AVATAR HERE FROM A SYSTEM BACK AT THE BASE.
BUT, FIRST THINGS FIRST...
VMMMM
HAHH ...?
THIS IS ME... AS OF THIRTY YEARS AGO, BACK WHEN I FIRST FOUND THE THING.
GOTTA LOOK GOOD WHEN I GET THE CHANCE, EH?
VMMMM
WHOA!

SKRUCH!

HEY, GRANDPA... HOW CAN I BE *WALKING?* I'M STILL IN THE *COCKPIT,* AREN'T I?

YOUR GUNNER SUIT HAS A *FULLY* INTER-ACTIVE VR SYSTEM, MY BOY.

THAT'S EXAXXION'S *TRANSPORT CASE,* AS IT LOOKED WHEN I FIRST DUG IT UP

SO WHAT'S *THAT* THING?

ONE HUNDRED METERS ON A SIDE, *TWO HUNDRED METERS* TALL.

THE GOVERNMENT WAS STUDYING WHAT THEY *THOUGHT* WAS A VERY LARGE METEORITE, BURIED UNDER SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS OF IGNEOUS ROCK... AND *THAT'S* HOW ALL THIS GOT STARTED.

THEY CONTRACTED WITH MY COMPANY TO USE MY OWN *BORING MACHINE.* MY PATENTED *KANOIDE* BLADES ARE THE HARDEST SUBSTANCE KNOWN TO MAN...SO, WHEN THE BLADES STRUCK THE CASE AND GROUND DOWN TO *NOTHING,* I SUDDENLY REALIZED THE *TRUTH.*

IT COST A *FORTUNE* TO HACK THROUGH ALL THE BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE... BUT IN THE END, I ACQUIRED *EXCLUSIVE* RIGHTS TO THE LAND... INCLUDING *EXCAVATION* RIGHTS

OF COURSE, I HAD TO ***BUY OFF*** THE OLD FARTS IN THE MINISTRY WHO'D FIRST ***ORDERED*** THE STUDY...BUT THAT WAS A ***CHEAP*** INVESTMENT, IN THE LONG RUN.

I MADE THE MONEY BACK IN ***NO TIME AT ALL.***

YOU KNOW, I DERIVED MORE THAN ***TEN PATENTS*** FROM THIS MAINTENANCE HATCH ***ALONE!*** WE'RE TALKING ***REVOLUTION-ARY*** NEW METALLURGY...

...AN ULTRA-SECURE ***LOCKING SYSTEM...*** AND A MAJOR ADVANCE IN ***CHIP DESIGN!***

BLEW MY ***MIND*** WHEN THE LAB DATED THIS DAMN THING AT OVER ***2000 YEARS OLD.*** BUT THAT WAS ***NOTHING,*** COMPARED TO WHAT I LEARNED TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN THE ***RIOFALDIANS*** SHOWED UP--AND I REALIZED THAT THIS CRITTER WAS BUILT BY ***THEM.***

WHA ...?

YOU MEAN... IT'S ***THEIRS?!***

YEP! STILL DUNNO WHAT THE HELL IT WAS DOING ***HERE...*** BUT IT'S GOT ***RIOFALDIAN SCRIPT*** ALL OVER IT, DOESN'T IT?

BUT...DOESN'T THAT MEAN THAT THIS IS THEIR OWN ***ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY?*** 2000 YEARS OLD... H-HOLY SHIT!! THEY'LL ***STOMP*** US WITH THEIR ***UP-TO-DATE*** STUFF!!

IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF ***TECHNO-LOGY,*** HOICHI.

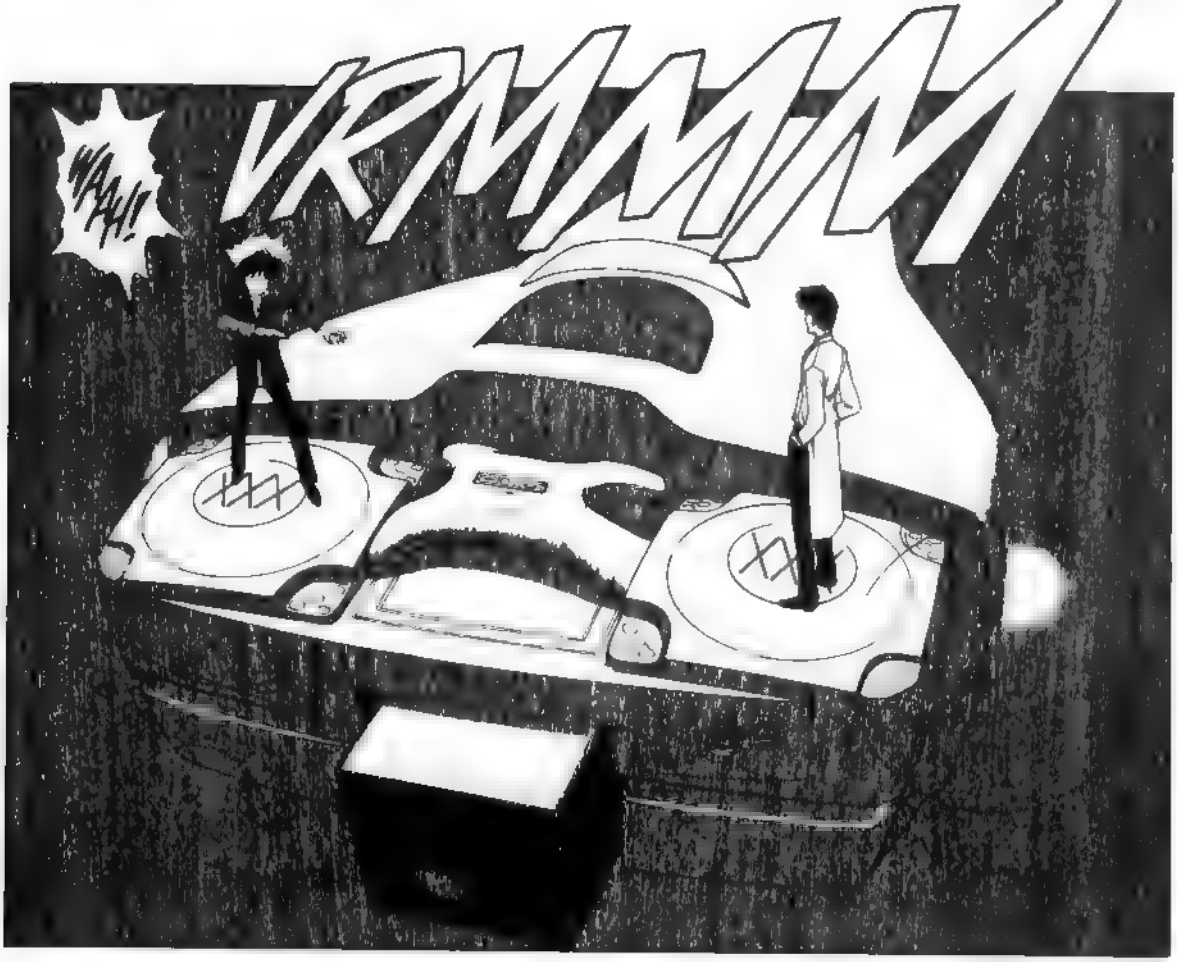
HEH

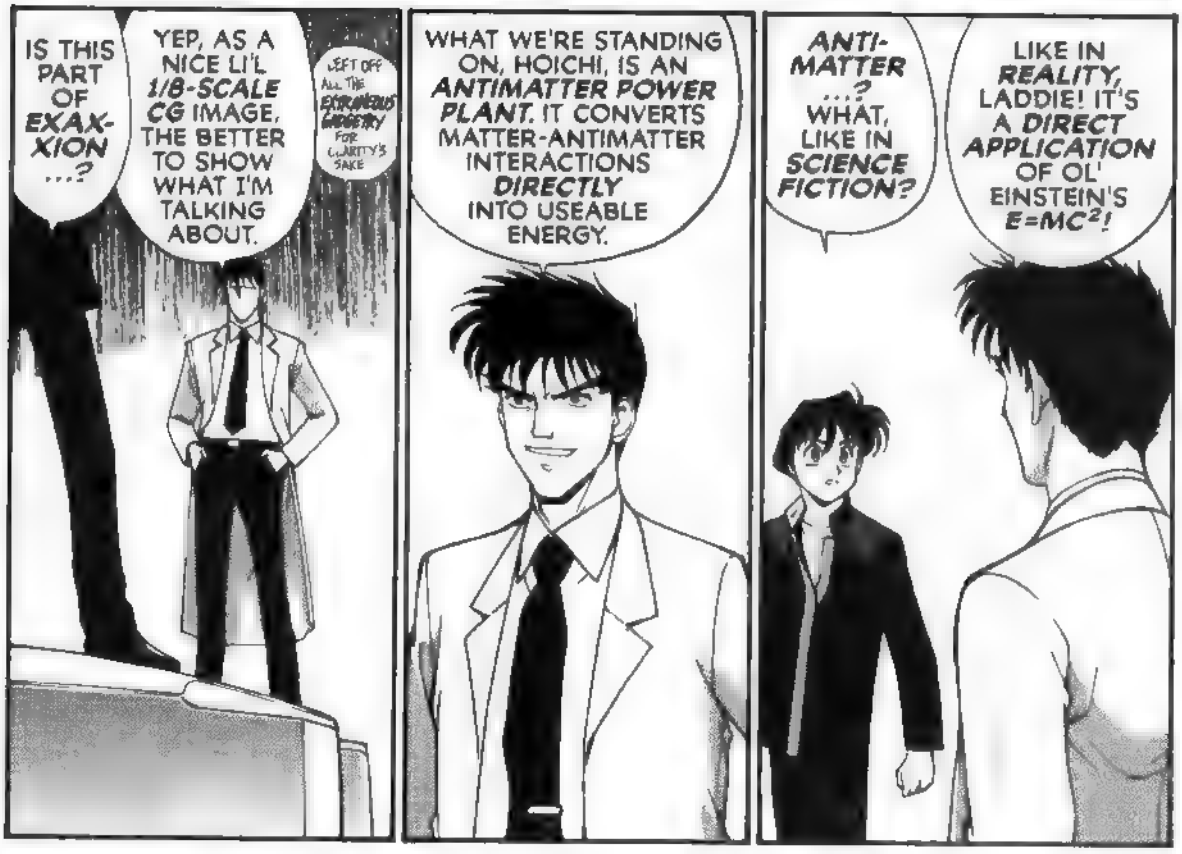
I FOUND SOMETHING THAT THEY NO LONGER ***POSSESS,*** LADDIE.

UH... LIKE ***WHAT*** ...?

LIKE ***THIS!***

WHOO


VRMMM
WAAH!


IS THIS PART OF EXAX-XION ...?
YEP, AS A NICE LI'L 1/8-SCALE CG IMAGE, THE BETTER TO SHOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
LEFT OFF ALL THE EXTRANEOUS GREEBLY FOR LARRITY'S SAKE
WHAT WE'RE STANDING ON, HOICHI, IS AN ANTIMATTER POWER PLANT. IT CONVERTS MATTER-ANTIMATTER INTERACTIONS DIRECTLY INTO USEABLE ENERGY.
ANTI-MATTER ...? WHAT, LIKE IN SCIENCE FICTION?
LIKE IN REALITY, LADDIE! IT'S A DIRECT APPLICATION OF OL' EINSTEIN'S E=MC²!

AND THIS UNIT WAS STAMPED WITH A ***SYSTEM NAME***...IN RIOFALDIAN, ***"RA'UN META'AR,"*** MEANING THREE META'AR, OR THESE X-LIKE SYMBOLS.

"META'AR" IS THE ***FINAL LETTER*** IN THEIR LANGUAGE, BY THE WAY... GIVING THIS SYMBOL SOMETHING OF THE MEANING ***"ULTIMATE POWER."***

SO WHEN I HAD TO COME UP WITH A ***NAME*** FOR THIS PROJECT...

...IT WASN'T ***TOO*** HARD TO THINK OF A GOOD ONE. I GIVE YOU-- ***"EXAXXION!"***

BEEP BEEP BREEP

EXAXXION

I JUST ADDED A FEW MORE ***LETTERS*** TO THE ORIGINAL CODE...AND ***VOILÀ!***

IT'S BASED ON THE WORD ***"EXACT,"*** AS A VERB, AS IN, ***"TO EXACT PUNISHMENT"...*** ***MASSIVE*** PUNISHMENT! THAT'S WHAT IT'S ***ALL*** ABOUT, MY BOY.

AND NEEDLESS TO SAY, ALL THE BEST ***GIANT ROBOTS*** HAVE A NAME ENDING IN ***"ON."***

IDEON, EVANGELION, GAIKON, VOLTRON, MEKTON, RANZEPHON, IRON DRAGON, ...BEAR LION

COOL, AIN'T IT? AND IT'S THE ***ONLY ONE*** OF ITS ***KIND,*** TOO!

HOW DO YOU ***KNOW*** THAT, GRANDPA? MAYBE THE 'FALDIES HAVE ***TONS*** OF ROBOTS LIKE THIS!

VRMMM

VRMMM

OH, BUT THEY ***DON'T,*** MASTER HOICHI.

!

HELLO. ♥ I'M ***RYOKO TANEGASHIMA,*** MASTER HOSUKE'S LEAD ASSISTANT.

I'VE CONFIRMED THAT THE RIOFALDIANS DON'T SEEM TO POSSESS ANY UNITS OF THE EXAXXION TYPE.
UH R- REALLY ...?
WHOA... SHE'S SERIOUSLY STACKED
YOU OUGHTA CHECK HER OUT IN THE FLESH, MY BOY !
THESE ARE THE RESULTS OF TEN YEARS OF COMPUTER HACKING.
SNAP
VRMMM
VREEE
WE'VE STOLEN BLUEPRINTS FOR EVERY RIOFALDIAN ASSET DEPLOYED HERE, FROM THEIR FIGHTERS AND SPACE CARRIERS TO THE ORBITAL ELEVATOR ITSELF...
...AND NONE OF THEM HAVE ANTI-MATTER POWER PLANTS.
IN FACT, JUST YESTERDAY WE DISCOVERED THE EXISTENCE OF AN "XXX ALERT SYSTEM," SET UP SOLELY TO DETECT ANTIMATTER REACTIONS.
ALL RIOFALDIAN MONITORS ARE LINKED INTO THIS SYSTEM, YET IT'S NEVER GONE ACTIVE BEFORE.
UPON ANALYSIS, WE FOUND THAT THE ALERT SYSTEM'S PROGRAMMING HAS NO PRESET SIGNATURES FOR IDENTIFYING OTHER RIOFALDIAN XXX UNITS...
JEEZ TH- THEY'RE HUGE...
...BECAUSE THERE AREN'T ANY! THEY DON'T HAVE ANY ANTIMATTER POWERED WEAPONRY OF THEIR OWN.

SEE? WE'RE SOLID HERE, LADDIE! A 2000-YEAR TECHNOLOGICAL GAP WON'T MATTER IN THIS SITUATION!
KAH!
YOU CAN BEAT THEM, HOICHI! FOR REAL!
BUT... BUT WAIT ...!
WHAT IF THE FALDIES HAVE A BUNCH OF ANTIMATTER OR XXX UNITS OR WHATEVER BACK ON THEIR HOME-WORLD...?
HEH...
FWSSH
HA H!

WELL, THEN... HUMANITY IS DOOMED, MY BOY! SIMPLE AS THAT!
WHA --?!
BUT, GRANDPA... IF IT'S EITHER EXTERMINATION OR COLONIZATION, THEN YOU KNOW SOME PEOPLE WILL CHOOSE RIOFAL--
TO HELL WITH THAT!
THINK OF THE ALIENS LIKE SOME DAMN SOLDIER, COMING TO CLAIM A PEASANT'S DAUGHTER FOR THE EMPEROR'S HAREM! NOW, WHO'D RESPECT A FATHER WHO'D GIVE UP HIS DAUGHTER WITHOUT A FIGHT, EVEN WITH THE ODDS AGAINST HIM? NO ONE!
WHAM!

I'LL *FIGHT* THEM, DAMN IT! NO MATTER *WHAT* THE COST MAY BE!
TO SAVE AND PROTECT MY *PEOPLE!* MY *PLANET!*

WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, HOICHI?!
ARE *YOU* THE KIND OF SPINELESS *WIMP* THAT WOULD JUST *GIVE UP* WHEN HE STILL HAS A CHANCE OF *WINNING?*
ME, GRAND-PA...? NO *WAY!*

ER...IS THIS *ALL* YOUR DATA ON *REIKO KANO* AND *AKANE HINO,* CAPTAIN ZAIER'R...?

YES, SIR.

IN THAT CASE, OUR *STRATEGIC MEDICAL TEAM* WILL ASSUME CUSTODY OF THE SUBJECTS NOW, CAPTAIN. I TRUST THAT WE CAN EXPECT *FULL SUPPORT* FROM YOUR TEAM?

YES, SIR... *MAJOR RYA'AM.*

GOOD! NOW, IF YOU'D PREP AN *OPERATING ROOM* FOR US...

AN *OPERATING ROOM,* SIR...?

INDEED! WE HAVE SOME *SPECIAL SURGERY* PLANNED FOR THESE TWO WOMEN.

WE HAVE AUTHORIZATION FROM *VERY* HIGH UP, CAPTAIN. I'LL NEED YOU TO SIGN THIS *SECRECY PLEDGE* IMMEDIATELY.

YES, SIR...

KLIK

"SPECIAL SURGERY" ...?
AND THEY PLAN TO OPERATE ON AKANE, TOO...?
SHE'S BREAKING OUT OF THE FACILITY RIGHT NOW, ON HER OWN!
OH, NO! CELIA! NORIKO! LISTEN TO THIS TRANS-MISSION FROM REIKO...
WHAT? ARE YOU SERIOUS --?
BUT REIKO BARELY HAS ENOUGH M-37 NANOMATERIAL TO PROTECT HERSELF, LET ALONE FIGHT HER WAY THROUGH A BUILDING FULL OF RIOFALDIAN SECURITY...! AND SHE PLANS TO ESCAPE WITH AKANE, TOO?!
SKUUK
VREEE
TO BE CONTINUED...!

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